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SPECIAL ISSUE

CENTRAL AMERICA

THE REGION: INEVITABLE REVOLUTIONS
WALTER LaFEBER

POLICY: WASHINGTON'S WARS
WILLIAM M. LeoGRANDE

WHERE IS NICARAGUA: A JOURNEY
PETER DAVIS

EL SALVADOR
ANNE NELSON AND CYNTHIA ARNSON

HONDURAS
GEORGE BLACK

GUATEMALA
VICTOR PERERA/AMERICAS WATCH

COSTA RICA
GEOFFREY FOX

BOOKS & THE ARTS
CENTRAL AMERICAN LITERATURE/POETRY/ART/FILMS

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EDITORIALS.

Contra Kissinger

As the crisis in Central America deepens, President Reagan's search for solutions grows more desperate. The "Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America," upon which Reagan rests his hopes for political success and strategic triumph, offers no credible plan for peace and social equity. Rather, it retails every contradictory tactic and failed formula for imperial dominance that has been proposed or tried by U.S. Administrations since McKinley. Its 132 pages, the result of mountains of research, blitzkrieg tours and nonstop deliberations, constitute the bureaucratic corr tive of Reagan's diplomatic initiative in the region: o blown, aggressive, palliative, superficial and blind to the peratives of history, revolution and independence.

This week *The Nation* publishes a special issue on Central America crisis, and the Kissinger commissi report provides a convenient point of departure. That d ment simply assumes that the revolutionary tide swee the nations south of our border is an unnatural, mali and reversible—force. Its military and economic re mendations are based on that assumption of iniquity are designed to stem the flood.

But as Walter LaFeber argues in his essay on page 6

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revolutionary movements in Central America are historically logical responses to centuries of domestic and foreign oppression, in which the United States has played a dominant role. The Kissinger crew tries to explain the history away:

> The ability of Somoza and later his sons [in Nicaragua] to portray themselves as friends and even spokesmen of the U.S. began with the use they were able to make of the legacy of U.S. military occupation, thereby creating an identity between the U.S. and dictatorships in Central America that lingers, independent of the facts, to this day.

But what are those "facts"? They hardly support the theory that venal and opportunistic *caudillos* falsified the Central American experience of neutral, idealistic and humanitarian U.S. interventions. In Nicaragua, for instance, the United States created the National Guard and put the first Somoza at its head. It lavished money and support on the Somoza dynasty until its dying days. It deposed the elected reformist government of Guatemala in a notorious C.I.A. coup in 1954, and in its place put a system of repression that remains, murdering whole populations. U.S. politicians may worry about torture and death squads when the press accounts grow lurid, but the oligarchies whose work the murderers are doing are solidly integrated in the U.S. economic system. The bananas of all the Central American republics have always been fruits in the North American corporate compote.

In one country after another, the revolutionary remedy has appeared as the only path to popular democracy and national independence. The course of human events does not now admit of more moderate solutions at a leisurely pace. No infusion of military or developmental aid, even on the grand scale recommended by Kissinger, can radically alter either the direction or the speed of change. But if President Reagan or his successor accepts the Kissinger assumptions, direct military intervention will be inevitable. And that will turn the crisis into a disaster.

The report's deliberate obfuscation of history is followed by a cynical misstatement of contemporary political and social realities. It paints Nicaragua, for example, as a Soviet-Cuban pawn, its people tormented by totalitarian repression and its energies directed at threatening legitimate Yankee interests. The commissioners dropped into Managua and flew away in a few hours: they missed the exhilaration and the fear, the promises and the paradoxes, the awful ambiguities of daily life in the heightened reality of the revolutionary experience. It was in hope of training a fresh and objective eye on the Sandinistas that we sent filmmaker Peter Davis to Nicaragua last December. Davis's impressions, which begin on page 76, present a landscape very different from the one the commission found. Nicaragua is deeply textured. Its people—not cold war cartoons—are struggling to rebuild a poor and despoiled country under a state of siege mounted by the United States and its *contra* clients.

Any U.S. policy that ignores that reality can never hope to bring progress to Central America, or any other place Washington seeks to influence. John Kennedy's *Alianza* came to grief precisely because it ignored the needs of the Latin American people and poured money into the oppressor classes. Responding to the challenge of the Cuban revolution, Kennedy threw some $10 billion (in 1961 dollars) at the Latins and ended up with more dictatorships, less development and more insurgency than when his program began. The Kissinger commissions's $8 billion aid package would yield similarly counterproductive results, for it gives priority to the military establishments which pre-empt beneficial social development.

Finally, the Kissinger commission makes the fatal mistake of detaching change in Central America from change in the United States. That simply will not work. The horrors that it sees in the Southern Hemisphere are reflections of all the distorted attitudes and twisted policies loose in the American heartland. Programs that derive from imperial sensibilities cannot promote independent development; strategies devised to confront cold war fantasies cannot solve real problems.

If disaster in Central America is to be averted, the wars of the region must be brought home and the political basis for U.S. policy must be changed. That is a staggering task, but it is not impossible. Already there is activity on many fronts. Church groups have organized a variety of anti-interventionist projects. U.S. citizens are picking coffee beans and harvesting crops in Nicaragua, and standing on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border as "witnesses" against U.S.-backed invasion.

IN-HOUSE NOTES

Like *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*, the case of *Harper & Row Publishers Inc. and The Reader's Digest Association Inc. v. Nation Enterprises and The Nation Associates Inc.* grinds on. In the latest development, earlier this month the eleven-judge U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit denied a petition for a rehearing and a rehearing *en banc*, filed by the aforesaid Harper & Row, etc., etc. In other words, a victory for our side. We await our honorable opponents' announcement as to whether they will take their case to the Supreme Court. If they do, the Court will have to decide whether to grant certiorari.

Because of the space requirements of this special issue, Calvin Trillin's "Uncivil Liberties" column and Christopher Hitchens's "Minority Report" have been postponed until next week. We apologize for the delay, and in partial compensation provide a preview of their columns. Trillin offers a deep philosophical discussion on the ethics of political blame-taking, occasioned by President Reagan's acceptance of responsibility for the deaths of the 241 troops in Beirut. In an expanded column, Hitchens casts a cold eye on Rupert Murdoch's latest service to American journalism, the purchase of the Chicago *Sun-Times*.

Good Fellowships: Katha Pollitt has been awarded a fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts. And Kai Bird, who writes the "Dispatches" column with Max Holland, has received a fellowship from the Alicia Patterson Foundation.

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Solidarity organizations—such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and its 300 chapters and affiliates around the United States—support the popular struggles in the region. Labor groups, provoked by the murders of U.S. and Central American organizers by right-wing death squads, are beginning to mobilize against Reagan's policy. Women's and peace groups, which had rarely been concerned with hemispheric affairs, are now projecting a larger campaign for justice and independence that includes Central American issues. Artists and professionals are involving themselves through their specialties. There is a significant medical aid campaign for the region. And through November, Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America will coordinate exhibitions and demonstrations of concern across the country. (See page 104 for information.)

As William M. LeoGrande explains on page 72, party politics may soon have to confront the Central America crisis and carry it into the mainstream election-year debate. Although politicians like to avoid matters of war and peace, events have a way of overtaking the most circumspect candidates, and events in Central America may overwhelm the pols before the campaign is over. Still, it took several years of war in Vietnam, hundreds of billions of dollars in military expenditures and tens of thousands of dead American soldiers for serious discussion of that cataclysmic conflict to invade politics on the home front. Central American affairs are just beginning to intrude on the national consciousness.

The war at home is essentially a fight to democratize foreign policy, to make the nature of American interests clear to everyone and to make the purposes of government action the stuff of popular discussion. Morris J. Blachman and Kenneth Sharpe, co-authors with William LeoGrande of the forthcoming *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Central America*, make a strong argument for democratization. In a comment prepared for this issue, they observe:

> It is easy to be unaware of the impact of foreign policy on democracy at home. Threats tend to be incremental, not dramatic. There is no "smoking gun" to draw attention; rather, it is a corrosive process, eating away a little at a time. Furthermore, most North Americans accept democracy in the United States as a permanent background condition. They take it for granted. They do not see how foreign policy decisions can erode the larger system.
>
> The threats are compounded if the citizenry lacks a strong commitment to democratic values. The values of trust, respect for the law, tolerance and willingness to compromise are necessary underpinnings of a constitutional democracy. The kind of foreign policy the United States currently pursues, if not publicly criticized and rejected, may diminish civic virtue.
>
> The material costs of our foreign policy deeply affect domestic society and institutions. A foreign policy that requires massive military spending drains the economy and unfairly apportions the social costs of the resulting limited growth.
>
> Some may argue that it is necessary to protect democracy at home by being antidemocratic abroad. They may regard the "water's edge" as a barrier and believe that the rules of the game are different in international relations—that our leaders would never act so oppressively in domestic affairs. But it is difficult to believe that the values America stands for at home are worthy of respect if the government denies them abroad. And the edge of the water is a shifting boundary that permits national security to be defined in terms of "internal subversion." The line between legitimate domestic protest and unpatriotic or subversive activities thus becomes dangerously vague, and those who oppose U.S. foreign policy are often accused of supporting the communist enemy.

Central America is not Vietnam, or Korea, or Cuba. But there are lessons from recent U.S. interventions that must not be forgotten. What the United States "lost" in Indochina was not simply an imperial outpost but a measure of trust between the government and the people. That war diminished the value of democracy and, in so doing, depleted the national treasury of decency, justice and independence. We must not let our stores be ravaged again.

James Storrow Jr.

Of all those who have invigorated and sustained *The Nation* during its 119 years, no one was more single-minded in his devotion than James J. Storrow Jr., who died suddenly on January 13. He was our publisher from 1966 through 1977, and with his wife, Linda Eder Storrow, as associate publisher, he managed and supported this enterprise during some difficult years. James Storrow was not without ambition, but his drive to excel was directed toward the success of the magazine and what it stood for rather than his own gain.

He looked on *The Nation* as something given him in trust to preserve and perhaps enhance. He cheerfully and energetically assumed the burdens and laid them down only when poor health made it impossible for him to continue.

Although he bore an old and distinguished Boston name, he was much less interested in upholding family tradition than in fostering the American tradition of dissent which has flourished at *The Nation*. In fact, he traced his political views to the outrage he felt, even against his own family, at age 10, when Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. A sturdy outgrowth of that youthful revolt was his distaste for the orthodoxies of the cold war liberals.

He was always a colleague rather than a boss. Lacking professional experience as a journalist, he nevertheless participated in the nuts and bolts of putting out this magazine, including proofreading, with an amazingly acute eye, every line of every galley that made up each issue. Respect for professionalism and a stubborn insistence on the highest standards, as well as an elegant sensitivity to language, compelled him to do that. As a publisher, his style was that of a proprietor, involved in all details of the enterprise and caring for the people who did the work. He was as generous toward them as he could possibly be.

He inherited an interesting and important tradition here at *The Nation* and carried it on for half a generation, adapting and improving it along the way. He leaves behind a great sense of dedication to its aims. His successors will cherish the memory of James Storrow, publisher of *The Nation*.

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ARTICLES.

U.S. & CENTRAL AMERICA

How We Make Revolution Inevitable

WALTER LaFEBER

During the last forty years, U.S. foreign policy has been transformed by two events: the development of nuclear weapons and the advent of mass revolutionary movements. Because of the first, there can be no more winnable world wars. Because of the second, even a superpower's military might can be neutralized by political organization.

The Reagan Administration has come to terms with neither change. The President's fears that voters will see him as a "mad bomber" are well founded. He has not achieved a single diplomatic triumph in three years (the much-maligned Jimmy Carter had several), and has based his foreign policy entirely on military force. No wonder last December he stated that "Armageddon" has been considered close before, "but never anything like this." Meanwhile, Reagan's deeply held belief that "the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on" causes him to see revolutions engendered by hunger and centuries of exploitation as Kremlin plots.

Mass revolutionary movements have developed in three Central American nations: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. In Honduras, the key U.S. military outpost in the region, evidence of such a movement has appeared. Only Costa Rica has avoided a serious internal threat. It has a relatively large middle class, a democratic tradition, high literacy, a homogenous population and, of special importance, no institutionalized military to devour resources. But it took the Costa Ricans centuries marked by civil wars to develop their society.

Failing to understand the causes of revolutions in the region, the Reagan Administration has chosen to deal with their results by force. The decision to follow that course was made during Reagan's first days in office, when he rejected overtures for negotiations from the Salvadoran revolutionaries (whose "final offensive" had stalled in January 1981), and from the Sandinista government. His attempt to use military power to compel a political solution has failed and threatens to touch off a regional war, which would mean the "Lebanonization" of the area. Despite the dangers, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Fred C. Iklé reiterated the call for a military victory last September. "Let me make this clear to you," he told a Baltimore audience, "we do not seek a military stalemate. We seek victory for the forces of democracy."

Walter LaFeber is Noll Professor at Cornell University and author of Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America *(W. W. Norton).*

The description of Reagan's allies as "the forces of democracy" reveals the fundamental problem with U.S. policy. With a few short-lived exceptions, Costa Rica is the only democracy that has ever existed in Central America. For more than a century, the U.S. government has allied itself with the most reactionary, antidemocratic groups in the region. Reagan and Iklé are carrying on the disastrous policies that produced the present crisis.

El Salvador provides the best illustration. A decade ago, it was one of the richest countries in Latin America (with its coffee crop and the small industries that made it "the Ruhr of Central America") and one of the poorest (its people were among the world's most undernourished and its overworked soil was badly eroded, bringing entire species of animals and plants to extinction as their natural habitats vanished). There was nothing paradoxical about that. All the country's wealth was in the hands of the Fourteen Families, the oligarchs who in the nineteenth century seized the best coffee-growing lands. The peasants, who made up about three-quarters of the population, worked for four months harvesting the coffee crop, and lived on the verge of starvation the remainder of the year. Many emigrated to neighboring Honduras. Some 300,000 took that route in midcentury, setting a precedent for the estimated half-million (or about one in eight Salvadorans) who have fled from the "forces of democracy" to the United States since 1979.

Prior to the 1970s the peasants stood and fought only once—in the 1932 uprising—and the army, controlled by the Fourteen Families, slaughtered 30,000 of them. Ever since, the generals have run the government (and increased their perquisites) while the oligarchs have exploited the peasants and the nation's wealth. Panicked by the faint stirrings of democracy in the 1972 election, when José Napoleón Duarte and the center-left coalition he headed would have won the presidency, the military stepped in. The election results were annulled and Duarte was exiled to Venezuela. That destroyed the hopes of Salvadoran moderates and accelerated the growth of revolutionary groups.

By 1980, those groups had united to form a military wing (the F.M.L.N., or Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, named after a leader of the ill-starred 1932 rebellion) and a political wing (the F.D.R., or Democratic Revolutionary Front). In the simplistic view of U.S. officials, the two are quite different. The F.M.L.N. is regarded as the dominant, violent and Marxist-Leninist wing, while the F.D.R. is considered nonviolent and democratic. But in an article last year in *Worldview*, Robert Leiken demonstrated how misleading that view is. Both groups are equally committed to armed struggle, he wrote. There is no other route to power in El Salvador. The country's history and Reagan's policies have eliminated the alternatives. According to Leiken, the major dispute on the left is tactical and crosses organizational lines. One faction seeks nonalignment and political negotiations; the other calls for military victory with aid from the Soviet bloc. (Since Leiken wrote, the distinctions between hard-liners and soft-liners may have become further blurred. See Nelson and Arnson, page 88.) By ignoring the group seeking negotiations, the Reagan Administration has strengthened the pro-Soviet side.

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Two other aspects of U.S. involvement in El Salvador should be noted. One is the belief, held by members of Congress as well as the Administration, that elections can somehow legitimize the regime and delegitimize the revolutionaries, whose numbers have grown in ten years. They forget that Salvadorans have no experience with democratic procedures. Thus in the 1982 U.S.-backed elections, the peasants, who are conditioned by stories of the 1932 massacre and by direct experience with some of the 40,000 civilians murdered by death squads and the military since 1979, gave a collection of right-wing parties a majority in the new Constituent Assembly. Their leader: Roberto d'Aubuisson, one of the most notorious death-squad commanders. Only U.S. officials were surprised. They immediately had to stop d'Aubuisson's attempt to make himself president. The United States refused to accept the results of its own election; nevertheless, the Reagan Administration continues to believe that the elections scheduled for March can reverse centuries of history and create a democratic government.

Finally, U.S. policy in El Salvador is based on the false assumption that over the long run, massive economic aid can prevent revolutionary victories. That is doubtful in view of the estimated $2 billion to $5 billion that wealthy Salvadorans have taken out of the country and deposited in Miami or Zurich banks since 1979. Also, the F.M.L.N.'s offensive launched in late 1983 has succeeded in hurting the regime economically as well as politically.

Any large economic aid program—whether dressed up in the rhetoric of Jeane Kirkpatrick's "Marshall Plan for Latin America" or in the "bipartisan" language of the Kissinger commission's proposals—is fatally flawed. The same problems were present in a policy that failed twenty years ago, John Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. That infusion of hundreds of millions of private and public dollars raised Salvadoran annual growth rates to 12 percent. The net result, however, was that those in power, the oligarchs and the military, got richer and the poor got poorer—and more discontented. Consequently, Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson had to pump in military assistance to maintain stability not only in El Salvador but throughout the region. El Salvador, which had no revolutionary groups when the program began, had several of them when it ended in the early 1970s.

Reagan's injection of enormous amounts of U.S. taxpayers' dollars can only repeat those disasters, unless the United States intervenes militarily, engages in a Vietnam-style conflict with the guerrillas and runs the country's economy. That is what the United States did in Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933. In 1927, Nicaraguan and Honduran peasants who had little to gain from the U.S. occupation rallied behind Augusto César Sandino to drive out the Yankees. They fought for six years, to a standstill. Although it was the era of "big stick" diplomacy, Washington ultimately decided that the costs were too high and withdrew, though not before training and supplying the National Guard. The U.S. military made Anastasio Somoza commander and left the Nicaraguans at his mercy. He murdered Sandino as the revolutionary was attempting to work out a political settlement, then grew rich and brutal. After Somoza's assassination in 1956, his sons took over the country their father had called "my farm," remaining

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staunch U.S. allies until the Sandinistas finally overthrew the last of them in 1979.

Although the United States has tried to moderate and even destroy it, the Sandinista government has survived. The Nicaraguan revolution is unique, comparable neither to Castro's model (indeed, in 1979 the Cuban leader counseled the Sandinistas to avoid his mistakes, especially in alienating the United States) nor, certainly, to the North American capitalist model. Capitalism as Nicaraguans experienced it under Somoza meant corruption, greed and torture. The Sandinistas have maintained a private sector which accounts for more than half the gross national product. They have negotiated a restructuring of their debts—and even of those incurred by the Somozas—with private international banks. U.S. investment in Nicaragua totals nearly $87 million.

But the Sandinistas are also carrying out a revolution. They seek to redistribute the country's wealth. Unlike El Salvador, where d'Aubuisson has succeeded in crippling land reform, the redistribution of farmland has been widespread in Nicaragua. Since 1979 the illiteracy rate has dropped from 50 percent to less than 20 percent. Health care has come to areas where neither the U.S. Marines nor Somoza had ever taken it. But also once the Sandinistas gained power, the middle class began to flee to Miami and Los Angeles. Censorship of newspapers and other media intensified. Mistakes (finally admitted by the Sandinistas) were made in trying to integrate the Miskito Indians into the political economy. As a result, thousands of Miskitos have joined counterrevolutionary groups. The Catholic Church, which supported the revolution in 1979, is divided about it in 1984.

Meanwhile, Reagan has wielded military force. His object has been to split the country so that the Sandinistas can no longer govern, the economy collapses and either a new regime takes over or C.I.A.-backed *contras*, including many who had served Somoza, overthrow the Sandinistas. The results of the policy, however, have not measured up to Reagan's hopes. The Sandinistas have armed the civilian population, something a government that fears its people would never do. They have also eased press censorship, carried forward long-announced plans for elections in 1985 and offered concessions to the Catholic Church and the United States.

At least twice since the middle of last year, the Sandinistas have made serious efforts to negotiate with Washington. Each time the Administration rejected their offer. The Sandinistas understand Reagan's real intentions. While I was in Managua last August, several high-level Nicaraguan officials said that the appointment of the Kissinger commission meant only that Reagan intended to copy Nixon's policy in Vietnam: bomb and destroy while pretending to seek a peaceful solution. In October, just before members of the commission flew to Managua, a C.I.A.-backed squad attacked Nicaragua's main port, destroying five oil-storage tanks and damaging cotton and coffee warehouses.

But Reagan's policy is not working. Although the *contras* have approximately 10,000 men, they have won no major victories, nor can they establish a provisional government inside the country, as they said they would. Reagan calls them "freedom fighters," but if Congress was to cut off C.I.A. support, their effort would collapse.

Reagan's military policy in Nicaragua and El Salvador depends on bases in Honduras. From the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, Honduras was the archetypal "banana republic," its economy, transportation, communications and government virtually owned by U.S. companies. Then United Fruit and other firms fell on bad times, and the U.S.-trained and -equipped Honduran Army took over. By the late 1970s the companies had recovered, and today Honduras is a U.S. economic colony and military stronghold. President Roberto Suazo Córdova defers to Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, who runs the nation. Trained by Argentine generals and far to the right of Reagan in his views on revolution, Alvarez quickly learned that he could win lots of U.S. aid by flying to Washington and sounding the anti-communist alarm.

So far, he has had to do that only once. Almost 3,000 U.S. troops are in his country—as well as large supply bases and training camps for the friendly Salvadoran and Guatemalan military, and several installations that can service the largest U.S. planes and the most sophisticated counterinsurgency equipment. Honduras is becoming more a U.S. military camp than a nation. Whether it can undergo that transformation without a revolution is questionable. Terrorists are active in the country, but Washington continues to pour in money, equipment and men to prop up an economy that is the second poorest in the hemisphere (next only to Haiti, a horror), without a thought to the consequences.

A revolution in Guatemala could be the most dangerous one of all from Washington's perspective. Just across the country's northern border are Mexico's oilfields. Guatemala has always been a bellwether for Central America: in 1944 it had the first middle-class revolution, and ten years later the first C.I.A.-directed counterrevolution, which placed the army in firm control. The military regime's brutalities during the 1960s set the stage for the current unrest, especially among the Indians, who make up a majority of the population and suffer the greatest poverty (their per capita income is less than $100 a year). Over the past year the army has intensified its repression. Now more than 200 people are slaughtered every month.

The regime's dismal human rights record caused Jimmy Carter to shut off the flow of military aid in 1977. Since 1981, however, Reagan has provided helicopters and other counterinsurgency weapons to the Guatemalan military. Because of Congressional opposition he has yet to turn on the military aid spigot full force, as he would like to. One problem has been the Guatemalan officer corps. Although many of its members were trained in the United States, it deeply resents political lectures from Washington. Last August Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt expressed disdain for Reagan's policies, and a faction led by Brig. Gen. Humberto Mejía Víctores seized power. Mejía Víctores received advice (at the very least) from U.S. military officers.

The new chief has proved to be no better than the old. Since the coup, two Guatemalans associated with the U.S. Agency for International Development have been murdered, and even the Administration holds the government's security forces responsible. The military remains divided; it is increasingly ineffectual and repressive. The theme is that sounded by a Guatemalan quoted in *The New York Times*

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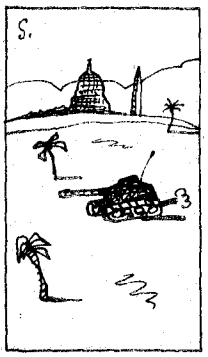
in 1980: "I wish the Americans would just leave us alone. If we want to kill each other off, it's our business." Nevertheless Reagan wants to square the circle: aid the military and lessen the murder. He has no other ideas.

In Guatemala as in El Salvador and Nicaragua, Cuban influence is apparent but minimal. When the State Department sought to blame the revolution in El Salvador on the Soviet Union in its 1981 white paper, the resulting skepticism was so embarrassing that the Administration has refrained from issuing other such studies. But it still does not understand that the determining factor for revolution in Central America is the history, over centuries, that produced the societies. Since the 1890s, the United States has been the dominant power in the region. Its policies, especially the Alliance for Progress and a half-century of military aid, have sharpened and helped transform the inequality of Central America into the bloodshed of revolution. Ignoring or ignorant of that fact, the Reagan Administration is hastening the revolution it so blindly fears. □



WASHINGTON'S WARS

Slouching Toward the Quagmire

WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE

The war for Central America is being fought on two fronts—one in Central America, the other in Washington—and the Reagan Administration is losing on both. Virtually none of the initiatives that the Administration has tried in Central America over the past three years have worked. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars spent in military training and equipment, the Salvadoran Army is losing its war. Despite episodic pressures from the U.S. Embassy, the Salvadoran regime remains unwilling to carry out agrarian reforms or curb human rights abuses. It prefers the method of *la matanza*—waging war on the populace rather than competing with the guerrillas for the people's loyalty and trust.

In Nicaragua, despite the Central Intelligence Agency's creation of a counterrevolutionary army numbering more than 10,000, the Sandinistas are militarily more secure and politically more popular than they were before the United States launched the not-so-secret war. Reagan's efforts to destabilize Nicaragua have had the perverse effect of destabilizing Honduras, where civilian authorities have been reduced to rubber-stamping the militarization of their country under Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez.

The failure of Reagan's policy in Central America has gradually produced a crisis in Washington. Congress, which offered little resistance to the escalation of the war during Reagan's first two years in office, became an obstacle to the Administration's policy during 1983, and will be an even greater one in 1984, Henry Kissinger notwithstanding. Within the Administration itself, the absence of any light at the end of the Central American tunnel has begun to polarize decision-makers as they ponder which dubious strategy to try next.

When Secretary of State Alexander Haig declared in 1981 that in El Salvador the new Administration was "drawing the line" against communism, he expected to win the war within a few months. A success in Central America would be Reagan's first foreign-policy victory, and its ramifications would be global. It would send a message to Cuba and the Soviet Union that the United States would no longer tolerate their international adventurism; it would send a message to Western Europe that the United States was once again committed to firm and aggressive world leadership; and most important, it would demonstrate to the American people that the United States could project military power in the Third World without becoming entangled in another Vietnam.

When the Salvadoran guerrillas proved to be more resilient than the Administration had anticipated, the mercurial Haig became an advocate of direct U.S. military action, not only in El Salvador but against Nicaragua and Cuba as well. The lesson Haig had taken from Vietnam was that to win a guerrilla war, you must "go to the source." On three separate occasions he suggested blockading Cuba, confident that such an action would not provoke a confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were less confident. They consistently opposed Haig, fearing that the military would again become the scapegoat in an unpopular war. Having only recently helped revive the domestic consensus in favor of a strategic arms buildup, the Joint Chiefs were not prepared to risk shattering it in Central America. The Pentagon argued that there was no need to go to the source; the war in El Salvador could be won simply by providing the Salvadoran Army with the training and equipment to do the job. Rather than Americanizing the war, it should be "Vietnamized" from the outset. This is still the prevailing view at the Pentagon.

When Haig resigned in June 1982, control of Central America policy passed to his Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas O. Enders. Enders had developed an elaborate strategy based on the premise that the war in El Salvador could not be won by military means alone. The prerequisite for victory was political: the Salvadoran regime, he believed, had to be consolidated around a center-right coalition that could effectively contend for the "heart and minds" of the people.

To achieve that, the United States would have to use its influence with the country's armed forces, through Defense Minister José Guillermo García, to effect limited agrarian reform and at least marginal improvement in the human rights situation. Coincidentally, progress in those areas would insure Congressional support for the Administration's El Salvador policy.

As the regime was consolidating its support, increased military aid would gradually give the Salvadoran Army the upper hand, eventually limiting the guerrillas to isolated pockets of resistance. Seeing that the war was hopeless, the

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center-left politicians in the Democratic Revolutionary Front (F.D.R.) might be enticed to break with the "Marxist-Leninist" Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.) and join an electoral process controlled by the government. The most recalcitrant fighters would remain in the hills, but without domestic or international legitimacy, they would be eradicated. At the State Department, this scenario was called the "Venezuelan solution," because of its superficial similarity to the way the Venezuelan insurgency was defeated in the 1960s.

From the State Department's point of view, the principal obstacle to this scenario was the Salvadoran far right, led by Roberto d'Aubuisson's ARENA Party. The conservative coalition's surprising victory in the March 1982 Constituent Assembly elections strengthened it enormously. Had it not been for the intervention of the U.S. Embassy and the Salvadoran armed forces, d'Aubuisson would have been elected president.

The far right's implication in the activities of the death squads, its opposition to agrarian reform and its rejection of any dialogue with even the moderates of the F.D.R. all undercut the State Department's strategy. In the fall of 1982, d'Aubuisson launched a campaign within the officer corps to depose Defense Minister García, who had loyally done the bidding of the United States in depriving d'Aubuisson of the presidency.

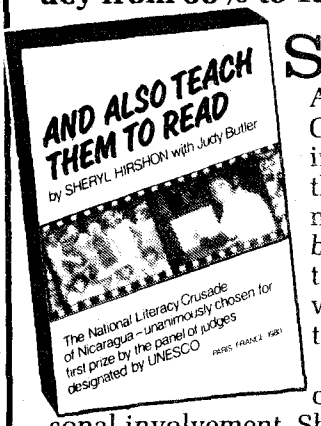
The State Department concluded that unless d'Aubuisson's power was broken, there could be no human rights or land reforms, no increases in military aid from Congress and no way to win the war. U.S. Ambassador Deane Hinton opened the attack by denouncing the death squads as a "mafia" and warning that continued U.S. support for the regime was contingent upon those reforms.

In Washington, however, the attack on the Salvadoran far right was not met with universal approval. Hard-liners within the Reagan Administration—chief among them Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and then-national security adviser William C. Clark—failed to see the merit of the Enders policy. To them, winning "hearts and minds" was secondary to winning the war. On orders from the White House, Hinton was unceremoniously told to halt his criticism of the right.

Last January, with the war going badly, the hard-liners moved to take control of the policy. When d'Aubuisson and his allies again tried to depose the Defense Minister, the United States declared its neutrality and García was replaced. Shortly thereafter, Enders and Hinton were fired. As control of the policy moved from the State Department to the National Security Council, Secretary of State George Shultz seemed incapable of contending with the hard-liners. His only victory was the appointment of career foreign service officer Thomas Pickering to replace Hinton.

The hard-liners' policy was straightforward: do whatever necessary to assure that the Salvadoran armed forces and the *contras* in Nicaragua win their respective wars. During the few months in which they held the reins of power, the hard-liners proposed increasing military aid to El Salvador by $110 million; doubling the size of the *contra* army; putting 5,000 U.S. combat troops into Honduras under the auspices of a quasi-permanent military exercise;

Immediately after the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua the new Sandinista government launched a second revolution — a crusade which reduced illiteracy from 50% to 12% in five months.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and stationing two carrier battle groups off the shores of Nicaragua.

Whereas Enders had supported covert action against Nicaragua as a way to force the Sandinistas to halt aid to the F.M.L.N., they sought to overthrow the revolutionary government. The Enders policy was vintage containment; the hard-line policy was meant to roll back communism, not just contain it. In operational terms, however, the two approaches were hardly distinguishable.

In short order, the hard-line policy ran into trouble with Congress. During the first two years of the Reagan Administration, Congressional opposition to his Central America policy was vocal and persistent but confined largely to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Reagan's critics were rarely able to muster a majority in either house; their only significant victory came in 1981, with the passage of certification conditions for military aid to El Salvador. But those were toothless. The Administration was required merely to certify every six months that progress was being made toward the certification goals. This the Administration did shamelessly.

By 1983, however, the Administration's credibility and support in Congress had begun to erode. Moderate Democrats and even some Republicans expressed doubts about whether Reagan's policy would work, and they feared that failure would produce even greater escalation. In the early months of the year, the Administration lost crucial committee votes, for the first time, on both military aid to El Salvador and the covert war against Nicaragua.

Enders had pursued a conciliatory approach to Congress, believing that if the Administration was at least verbally responsive to its concerns, Congress would keep providing the resources necessary to prosecute the war.

The hard-liners took a different attitude. Rather than try to convince Congress of the wisdom of their policy, they sought to intimidate it, threatening to blame the Democrats for "losing" Central America if they refused to give the President what he requested. The problem, as Jeane Kirkpatrick explained shortly after the President's dramatic speech to a joint session of Congress on April 27, was that some members of Congress "want to see Marxist victories in Central America." To the threat of a McCarthy-style recrimination was added a new twist: if Central America fell to communism, the United States would be inundated with "feet people"—hordes of brown refugees streaming north.

The hard-liners' confrontational approach quieted critics temporarily, but it failed to win back the Democratic and Republican moderates who had deserted the Administration early in the year. Ultimately, Congress cut Reagan's request for military aid to El Salvador by almost half, and rejected his proposal to expand the covert war. The House of Representatives, with the Democratic Party leadership carrying the battle, twice voted to cut off funding for the covert war. The Republican majority in the Senate saved it for the time being, but the final disposition of the issue was postponed until the middle of this year.

Within the Administration, the hard-liners' control over Central America policy proved to be short-lived. William Clark's surprise transfer from the National Security Council to the Interior Department removed the most powerful hawk from the foreign-policy debate, and a bitter internecine battle ensued over who should be named to replace him. Although Clark favored his deputy, Robert McFarlane, the rest of the hard-liners lobbied for Kirkpatrick. Shultz, backed by White House moderates James Baker 3d and Michael Deaver, vetoed Kirkpatrick and backed McFarlane.

Reagan's selection of McFarlane was a victory for George Shultz. With Clark at Interior and Kirkpatrick in the doghouse for her unseemly public pursuit of the N.S.C. post, Shultz became the dominant foreign-policy official.

With the hard-liners in retreat, the State Department moved quickly to resume the Enders strategy. In November, U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering launched an astoundingly sharp public attack on the Salvadoran death squads—a virtual replay of Hinton's attack the year before. But whereas Hinton was reprimanded, Pickering's claims were echoed by Washington. The Administration's offensive culminated with Vice President George Bush's trip to San Salvador and the delivery of an ultimatum: increases in U.S. aid would be contingent on an end to the death squads and the exile of some two dozen people associated with them, by January 10.

Yet on the eve of Bush's trip Reagan vetoed legislation to extend the certification requirement for aid to El Salvador. The veto, decided on at the last moment over the vociferous opposition of Shultz, was a clear defeat for the State Department and a gratuitous slap at Congress, which had passed the bill unanimously. And the White House said that Reagan was even inclined to ignore the Kissinger commission's recommendation of tying military aid to human rights progress. The hard-liners, it appears, have not yet conceded control of policy.

As Bush's deadline passed, Salvadoran President Alvaro Magaña confessed his inability to meet Washington's demands; only three mid-level military officers were slated for overseas duty. The Salvadoran military judged that the Reagan Administration was more interested in defeating communism than in protecting human rights, so they called Washington's bluff.

Despite the Salvadoran's failure to comply with Bush's ultimatum, the Reagan Administration is preparing another massive increase in military aid, claiming that "progress" is being made against the death squads.

Congress is not likely to be so generous. The Kissinger commission's report, delivered with much fanfare, does not appear to have changed many minds. Kissinger's mandate was to reproduce the political miracle of the Scowcroft commission, in which a putatively bipartisan commission stacked with people certain to support Reagan's policies retrieved a Congressional majority for the White House. In this, Kissinger seems to have failed. On the central issues of making military aid conditional on human rights improvements in El Salvador and of continuing the covert war against Nicaragua, the commission was unable to reach a consensus.

As the 1984 election campaign gets under way, the judgment at the White House is that Central America is not an "active" issue: it will not determine how most Americans vote in November. But it is potentially dangerous. Each time a Central American crisis flares, it rekindles mem-

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ories of Vietnam and aggravates fears that Reagan's trigger-happy foreign policy is leading toward war.

The recurrent nightmare among Reagan's political advisers is that Central America might explode in the midst of the campaign, forcing Reagan to choose between "losing" El Salvador or losing the election. They wish Central America would simply go away for ten months, and they will push for more resources to keep the lid on—a strategy designed not to win but to avoid defeat.

Although many in Washington saw the invasion of Grenada as a dress rehearsal for an invasion of Central America, Reagan's political and military victory on the island does not alter the calculus of Central America. The costs of invading Grenada were predictably low—7,000 troops against 2,000 poorly trained and demoralized Grenadians. The costs of invading Central America would be much higher. There are 8,000 combat-experienced guerrillas in El Salvador, and an army of 25,000 in Nicaragua. Grenada gave Reagan a political boost because it was a quick victory; Central America would be a quagmire.

Reagan's advisers are not going to make Central America a campaign issue if they can avoid it, and the Democrats are not likely to force the issue unless the United States becomes directly involved in hostilities. The Democratic Party is split over what U.S. policy should be. Liberals like Representative Michael Barnes and Senator Christopher Dodd have been outspoken in their opposition to Reagan, but conservatives like Senator Lloyd Bentsen and Representative Jim Wright, the majority leader, have generally supported the President's policy.

As the election year begins, party leaders Tip O'Neill and Robert Byrd want to maintain unity. They do not regard Central America as important enough to risk reopening the rancorous division between hawks and doves that presaged the Democrats' defeats in 1968 and 1972.

During the next nine months, the most likely scenario is that the Administration will lurch forward without clear direction, simply upping the ante in the hope that it will produce the desired results; Congress will become more rebellious but will not decisively repudiate Reagan's policy; and both parties will ignore Central America as much as possible during the Presidential election campaign.

But the war in El Salvador has reached that critical juncture in guerrilla wars when the regime is so fragile and the armed forces so demoralized that a single guerrilla victory can bring down the whole edifice like a house of cards. What will Ronald Reagan do if that happens?

For the past three years, the Administration has defined Central America as vital to the security of the United States, and President Reagan has said more than once that he is not going to lose another country to communism on "his watch." For three years, the hard-liners and those who believe the war cannot be won by military means alone have battled each other for control of policy, neither understanding the forces that limit Washington's power to preserve the corrupt and decaying *anciens régimes* of Central America.

No one in the Reagan Administration wants to send U.S. troops to Central America. But no one will face the reality that direct intervention may ultimately be the only way to avoid "defeat." Though he often gets his facts wrong, Ronald Reagan is, as Presidents go, unusually candid about

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his beliefs. More than once he has said that he will not let Central America fall to the communists. We should take him at his word. □

WITH SANDINO IN NICARAGUA

Grippe had me nailed to a cross; my bones were cracking with fever, but at 8 o'clock at night we set out in a driving storm. We wove in and out of the back alleys of the town, took to the meadow and sought at full gallop the southeast trail. Dogs barked, doors flashed open, but we vanished, leaving many to wonder what travelers were doing on the road at such an hour in such a storm. . . .

Though the wind howled over Ramango, we spent the night snugly in the long barracks. The soldiers were as free and easy as if the enemy were a thousand miles away instead of on the next ridge. . . . After too few hours of sleep the blast of the bugler brought me to, fumbling for matches and shoes at the grim hour of 4, according to schedule. In less than half an hour, Sandino received me in his office in the rear main barracks by the light of a lantern. . . .

Sandino said, "We are not protesting against the size of the [U.S.] invasion, but against invasion. The United States has meddled in Nicaragua for many years. We cannot merely depend upon her promise that she will someday get out. Every day intervention is more pronounced. . . .

"You tell me that the governments of Honduras and El Salvador are hostile to me. Tomorrow they will regret such an attitude. Tomorrow each may have the same struggle. Central America should stand together against the invader instead of with the governments that ally themselves with the foreigner. . . . "

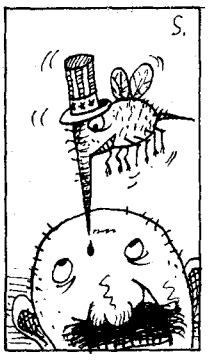
What, I asked Sandino, do you consider the motives of the American government?

"The American government," he said, with a lurking smile, "desires to protect American lives and property. But I can say that I have never touched a pin belonging to an American. I have had respect for the property of everybody. And no American who has come to Nicaragua without arms in his hands has been injured by us. . . . "

When later we crossed into the Coco River basin, the cry was the same: "The Machos are coming. They will burn our houses." We have taken a place in the minds of these people with the hated Spanish conquerors of other days. The password runs among the people and it echoes in their songs: "We must win our second independence, this time from the Americans, from the Machos, the Yankees, the hated gringos."

America's friends . . . are the politicians who have bled the country for so many decades, they are the politicians who wish to stay in power or to get into power with our help. I would not advise any American marine to walk lonely roads at night in Nicaragua.

—Carleton Beals, The Nation
February–March 1928



WHERE IS NICARAGUA

Mirror of Our Midlife Crisis

PETER DAVIS

Sing of that second realm where the human spirit is purged. . . .
If within the womb of those flames thou didst abide
Full a thousand years, they could not make thee bald of one hair.

—Dante

Managua, Nicaragua, What a wonderful spot!
There's coffee and bananas and a temp'rature hot,
So take a trip and on a ship go sailing away—
Across the "agua" to Managua, Nicaragua, Olé.

—Albert Gamse ©

On a blasted corner in Managua, a city which, for all purposes beyond the sentimental need of every people to call some place their capital, ceased to exist after the earthquake of 1972, three white buildings continued to stand until early 1978. The buildings were white not because it is popular and cheap in the tropics—yellow and beige and pink resist the dust better and look cleaner longer—but because they performed a singular medical function that mandated a hygienic veneer. Nicaraguans came to the buildings to bleed into small transparent bags. The product was shipped north, a contribution to the raw materials Nicaragua exported to the United States. Surely this must be the kind of "illuminating detail" journalists are supposed to look for, the part that reveals the whole. What greater exploitation can there be than for an impoverished people to have their own blood extracted for the benefit of their imperial masters?

Well, yes. But the trouble with everything in Nicaragua is that one detail leads to another, to almost infinite others, until each by itself has only as much meaning as a dot in a pointillist painting. The next dot may reject the last, and in turn be denied by its successor as part of a series of contradictions and paradoxes that threaten to swallow one another and engulf the sanity of anyone trying to observe them. A clear case of capitalist imperialism or communist oppression, of social progress or economic decline, need only be turned slightly on its axis in order to be seen as its opposite. It is not that nothing is true in Nicaragua—for a starter I would say that the revolution is succeeding more than it is failing and that American policy toward Nicaragua is doing the reverse—but that the truth seems to dissolve into a col-

Peter Davis is the author of Hometown *(Simon & Schuster), a contributor to magazines and a filmmaker whose work includes* Hearts and Minds *and* Middletown. *His expenses were paid in part by a grant from The Nation Institute's Research Fund.*

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lection of meanings whose common thread is their ambiguity. The only antidote is certainty. If you go to Nicaragua committed to the revolution, you will find plenty to strengthen your commitment. If you go opposed to the regime, you will find a satisfying amount to criticize. But if you go with an ambivalent attitude, you may return with ambivalence whose depth is oceanic.

A priest says the Sandinistas who control Nicaragua are trying to crush the church; a nun swears she found God in the revolution. One industrialist says the government stifles free enterprise, another claims the revolution has been good for business. A State Department official condemns the "asphyxiating" Nicaraguan atmosphere, the guns that are seen everywhere, but it is the only Central American country in which the U.S. Ambassador can go anywhere without bodyguards. The Ambassador himself is available to a wide range of reporters and is genial, informative and surprisingly nonjudgmental. But he refuses to be quoted in the American press, insisting on being referred to as "a Western diplomat," summoning an image, for anyone raised on cowboy movies, of a Texas sheriff not unduly shy about reaching for his equalizer. But—again "but," always "but"—the Ambassador gamely appeared on Nicaraguan television in a brisk policy debate with Sandinista officials who outnumbered but politely did not overwhelm him. This took place in December 1983, when it was devoutly believed by many Americans and by most of the 2.9 million Nicaraguans that the United States was preparing to invade the country and replace its government.

Putting many of its meager resources into education, the revolution is on the verge of a triumphant conquest of illiteracy among peasants and workers, but the middle class complains that the newly literate are taught history, sociology and economics along strict Marxist lines. "An Americas Watch Report: Human Rights in Central America" concludes that "Nicaragua shows no signs of evolving in the direction of a democratic society in which freedom of expression is respected." With a pride in our civil liberties that approaches smugness, Americans in general point confidently to the Bill of Rights as freedom's touchstone for the world. But Nicaraguans are not buying American these days. "Your freedom, sir," said Daniel Ortega Saavedra, head of Nicaragua's revolutionary junta, as we talked alone late one hot December night in Government House, "your freedom is a monster."

A Crowded, Contradictory Canvas

Soaring and plunging, the revolution is like a kite in an uncertain wind. People live normally, ordinarily—and also on the edge of sanity and peril. The cast of characters might be from one of those Renaissance canvases that seem to include everyone in Florence. The Jinotega coffee grower who pays the state more taxes than it requires because he wants the country strong for the anticipated U.S. invasion. The union organizer from Rivas, giving the revolution credit for rescuing Nicaraguan labor from serfdom. The banana plantation owner who sees in the revolution the death of democracy. The chemical executive who sees the Sandinistas as Nicaragua's determined greenhorn saviors. The lawyer from Maine, his life in what most of us would consider splinters, cheerfully finding his best self by working for Nicaragua. The Gold Star Mother from Los Angeles, her

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son killed in Vietnam, helping with the Nicaraguan rice harvest, putting her life in jeopardy as a witness for peace on the Honduran border. The Managua newspaper editor who does not know from one day to the next what he will be permitted to publish; his brother, a rival editor, who sees the revolution as mission, the mission as national reconstruction. The textile worker whose misery under the old regime has been transformed to something beyond hope: he talks of a revolutionary sunrise that gives him and his family anticipations as fond as their memories are bitter.

In this riddled context, Americans ask questions. Is Nicaragua the first mainland domino, falling long enough after Cuba to make Castro's revolution an antecedent rather than a precedent? What is the Soviet role? Given U.S. actions as well as Nicaragua's momentum, what are the revolution's prospects? What might an appropriate U.S. response to Nicaragua be? Is there a point, in terms of libertarian expectations, where the Sandinista revolution could be said to have betrayed itself?

Who validates Nicaraguan history? A secret State Department memorandum has a clarifying passage: "Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fall. Nicaragua has become a test case. It is difficult to see how we can afford to be defeated. Usually it has been sufficient for us to intervene on the sole pretext of furnishing protection to American lives and property." This memorandum, which was declassified in the 1960s, was written in 1927. Does current thinking—that of the State Department and the Kissinger commission on Central America—repudiate this attitude as oppressively anachronistic? Or does it reaffirm America's manifest hemispheric destiny? The questions seem pertinent in the United States. In Nicaragua they recede dizzyingly before new questions, an agenda with its own demands, a socialism, for instance, hopelessly married to capitalism.

Bleeding a Country

What a relief to return for a moment to the simplicity of the Managua blood bank, draining the malnourished prerevolutionary Nicaraguans for the benefit of a rich United States, swollen like a tick from sucking up the very life substance of its subjects to the south. Except it was not exactly a blood bank. It was essentially a plasmapheresis center, where the donor's blood, after removal, was centrifuged to separate out the plasma. The packed red cells and other blood components were mixed with saline solution and reinfused into the donor. The plasma was shipped to the United States. According to a hematologist who received the plasma in New York City and a research chemist who inspected the plasmapheresis process in Managua, the center's health standards were the highest of any such facility in the world. The plasma produced was superior (with less risk of infectious hepatitis, for example) to what could be obtained from any comparable center in the United States. The three buildings in Managua contained 180 beds and were capable of handling 1,000 donors a day. When the operation was at its peak, 20,000 liters of plasma were shipped to the United States every month, approximately seven times as much as that produced by the average center in a big American city. The huge volume held the price of plasma down in the United States and made it possible for patients in charity wards to have medical treatment that otherwise would have been completely out of their reach. Nicaraguan plasma kept American hemophiliacs, who at that time were almost completely dependent on a steady flow of blood, from having to pay with their lives for failures of our own social policy and individual generosity.

The Nicaraguan donors were attended by twenty-four doctors and received better medical care than that provided at plasmapheresis centers in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. Because of malnutrition in Nicaragua, a relatively high percentage of volunteers were rejected; they were given free food and a supply of vitamins. Those accepted were fed a hot meal after their donation, and they were paid the equivalent in Nicaraguan cordobas of what their counterparts at U.S. commercial blood banks were receiving in dollars. The pay, of course, was the reason the center attracted so many donors among the unemployed from all over Nicaragua. It was a kind of salary for the wretchedly poor, and the plasma separation process had so little effect on their health that they were able, like volunteers in the United States, to donate as frequently as twice a week.

Then everyone was served: Nicaraguans and Americans each got something they desperately needed. But there is one more detail. The Managua center was owned by an exiled Cuban doctor and by Anastasio Somoza Debayle, dictator of Nicaragua and third in his family, after his father and brother, to hold that post with the economic and military support of the United States. Although Somoza and the Cuban doctor, whose name is Pedro Ramos, did pay the donors between $5 and $10 for each unit of plasma, they sold it for at least three times that amount. For 20,000 liters per month at approximately $50 per liter, the take was around $12 million a year. Somoza, bleeding his own people, had turned his country into the ultimate family business. When *La Prensa*, the Managua newspaper that opposed the Somozas then and opposes the Sandinistas now, ran a series of articles in 1977 denouncing the traffic in blood, Dr. Ramos sued its editor, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, for libel. He lost the suit and moved to Miami. In January 1978, Chamorro was assassinated, and a captured hit man identified Ramos as having put out the contract. Managua erupted. A full year and a half before the triumph of the

EQUAL TIME

"Let us be clear as to the American attitude toward the government of Nicaragua. We do not seek its overthrow." —*Ronald Reagan, April 1983*

"I disagree with the aid that we have provided for [Nicaragua] because I think we did it under the illusion that somehow we were helping hold off a truly leftist government, that we had some kind of moderate government there. . . . I think we are seeing the application of the domino theory . . . and I think it's time the people of the United States realize that we're the last domino."

—*Ronald Reagan, September 1980*

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Sandinista revolution, enraged Nicaraguans stormed the plasmapheresis headquarters and burned it down. Somoza lost a business, and his customers lost access to 15 percent of the world's plasma supply. The Nicaraguans' name for the center they destroyed was *casa de vampiros*.

Four and a half years after the victory of the Sandinista revolution in July 1979, Nicaragua presents the United States with a midlife crisis. Old enough to know better, they used to say, young enough to do it again. We look to Nicaragua, as we once looked to Vietnam, to test our illusions (the situation is infinitely improvable) or to confirm our disillusionment with everything (the situation is only hopeless, not serious). While we support a government of murderers in El Salvador, we oppose one of independence and progressive ideals in Nicaragua. Our policies toward Central America have edged the Soviet Union into its own contradiction. In El Salvador the Russians connive to overthrow a government that suppresses its opposition as they themselves do, only less effectively. In Nicaragua the Russians support a government committed to a pluralism they would never tolerate.

But Soviet contradiction is hardly U.S. resolution, and we contend with the shadows in our own dark thicket. If Dante, who knew a midlife crisis when he saw one, could return to make his journey through Central America, El Salvador would offer him at least snapshots of Inferno. Paradiso, despite Costa Rican aspirations, would be served up only by Club Med. For Purgatorio, the hope, the disappointment, the promise and the uncertainty belong to Nicaragua. In this most Catholic of countries, the people do speak of doing penance for the past, enduring assorted mortifications for a redemptive future. Their revolution is a mirror in which everyone can see himself. In a general way, farmers and workers see dignity, students see potential, the business class sees itself capsizing, while visiting Americans see reflected in the revolutionary fervor our own spent country come of middle age, wondering what to do with itself.

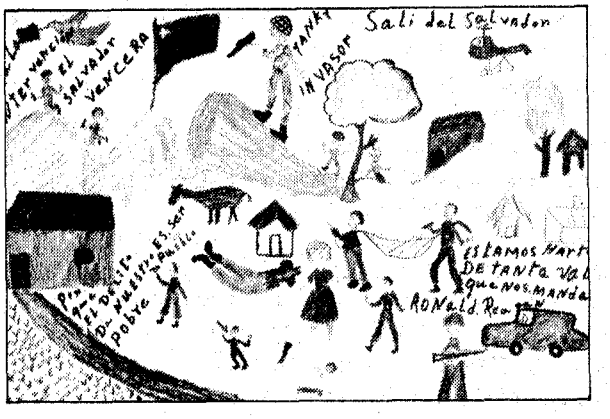
The mirror is not only in the revolution but in Nicaragua as an entity. Surely there is a narcissism to our feeling that a country has to be molded in our image or else we will not let it exist at all. One nation trying to raise another as a miniature of itself has to be afflicted with a vanity past all sensible longing. But look: there *is* this ghostly mirror quality between the United States and Nicaragua, each with its need for friendly neighbors on its northern and southern borders, its coastlines open to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, its racial problems involving whites, blacks and Indians, its colonial past.

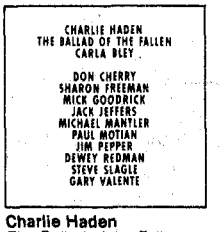
Infinity of Mirrors

A mirror is almost the first object a visitor comes in contact with in Nicaragua. Above each customs booth at Sandino International Airport, a mirror perches, tilting down over the heads of arriving passengers, enabling the customs officer to look at people's feet if that is what he wants to do. He can tell if they are carrying a dirk in their boots or sporting Guccis or only wearing scuffed Adidas. The impression of surveillance is fortified by a sign on the booth quoting Gen. Augusto César Sandino's advice to be on the lookout for "*los imperialistas Yanquis*." The mirror is straight from East Germany, which has provided training and techniques

Top 40 in Chile and El Salvador.

The Ballad of the Fallen.





Charlie Haden
The Ballad of the Fallen

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Painting by Celia, a Salvadoran refugee in the Manuel Franco Refugee Center, Managua, Nicaragua

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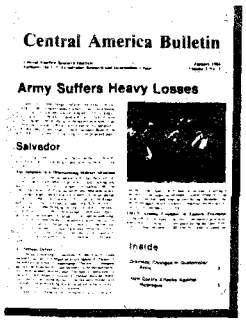

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—Ruben Zamora, F.D.R.-F.M.L.N.

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for the Sandinista security apparatus. But the customs officer is not East German. He is smiling, he is puffy with midnight sleepiness and he is, if ethnic generalizations can still be applied without insult, very Latin. "*Bienvenido*. Enjoy," he says.

As it turned out, despite the presence and at times the attention of armed soldiers throughout the country, the mirror and the quote from Sandino at the customs booth were the last time I felt actively watched during two and a half weeks in Nicaragua. Either the Sandinistas cannily perfected their surveilling subtlety once the hint had been dropped heavily at the airport, or my awestruck admiration for them blinded me to their Orwellian scrutiny of my every twitch and jotting. Since neither possibility would be much in character, I have to conclude that outsiders—not, certainly, Nicaraguans—can roam the nonmilitary areas of Nicaragua unperceived by the leftist totalitarian thugs, or whatever President Reagan is calling them this week, who run the country.

Above the baggage inspection ramp a sign in English said, "Welcome to Nicaragua. You'll love it." An official was inspecting a porn magazine he had found in the luggage of the passenger ahead of me, a Nicaraguan returning from Miami. After he gave the magazine back to its owner, he conscientiously searched my belongings before waving me through. Suspicious that everyone was an agent for us or them, and apprehensive—no, terrified—that the widely predicted U.S. invasion would begin as soon as I arrived, I glanced furtively at the night sky for planes or parachutes, then shared a cab with two Americans who spoke with slight Spanish accents. They said they were businessmen from Iowa, tire retreaders come down to do some merchandising in Nicaragua. Right, I wanted to say to them, and I'm getting set to replace Willie Wilson in the outfield for the K.C. Royals if his coke suspension holds. Can't the Company think up a better cover than that? Still, all the way into town they kept up their chatter about the Nicaraguans needing retreads since they could not afford to buy new tires. Who knows?

By all the norms and wicker of the international hospitality industry's tropical division, Hotel El Camino is easily Managua's best. First World luxury set in Third World ambiance, fashionably elevated bar above a large clean pool, tennis courts, private jogging course, rooms so relentlessly air-conditioned they rebuke the entire country that surrounds them. El Camino's problem is that it is located so near the airport it has more to do with entering or leaving Nicaragua than with actually being there. Thus it is to a prerevolutionary, pre-earthquake trapezoidal hive called the Intercontinental—the Intair as it is pronounced locally—that except for ABC News which secretes itself at El Camino, almost everyone in the international information-gathering community turns. It is the Elaine's of Central America. The Intercontinental buzzes with journalists, photographers, TV crews, putative agents, visiting U.S. officials in-country for a quick briefing but not important enough to stay with the Ambassador, town gossips, Marxist theorists delivered straight from La Coupole along with their Gauloises, revolution groupies, Sandinista press officers and poets, black marketeers, idealists gathered for one more chance to remake the world.

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The Intercontinental rises on a sloping hill in what its publicity calls an imitation Mayan pyramid, bestriding what would be downtown Managua if there were still a town to be down in. Because of the hill, it seems taller than its nine stories. Although the Intercontinental is even less representative of life in Managua than the Helmsley Palace is of life in New York City, its magnetism for such a diverse congregation allows it to reveal certain of the revolution's sliding free-form realities.

On the night I arrived, Orson Welles was crowding out all other objects on the small television screen in the bar. Like TV in many American bars, the set stayed on for the sake of the pictures, providing the comforting illusion of more people in the room having a better time than was actually the case, but the sound was turned off. Orson Welles was followed by a trailer for a forthcoming *Lou Grant* episode.

Two young men came in from the pool, where there was a big party with spirited dancing. The music from the loudspeakers around the pool almost drowned out the Nicaraguans as they asked what I was doing in their country.

"*Periodista*," I said.

"Oh, a journalist."

"*Sí*," I said.

"Yes," they said. "Did you come to see the revolution?"

"Isn't that why everyone comes now?"

"Do you like it?"

"I don't know. I've only been here ten minutes. Do you?"

Wait a minute! One of them was crying. "No," he said, "it's not for me. It's good for some people, not for me."

He was 18, or 30. It was dark in the bar, but the tears shone on his face and he tried to sniff them back.

"Why isn't it good for you?"

"It's not mine, it's not my own, this revolution. I want to love it and I can't."

On the television screen, *Lou Grant* was replaced by the F.S.L.N. (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) logo: *TODAS LAS ARMAS AL PUEBLO*. All arms to the people is the literal translation. Learn to live with contradiction is the looser construction. The old mixed signal.

Outside by the pool, young Nicaraguans were flinging themselves around with what I took to be rather reckless abandon. Where were the bomb shelters, the trenches? Where was the country under siege? Is this what I was so scared of? For these people it was graduation night, maybe a Christmas ball. It was hot, at least 80 degrees, and the sound system blared "Maniac" from *Flashdance* while the poolside party jumped and swarmed. Behind the dancers a wall perhaps twelve feet high protected the Intercontinental from what used to be Managua. An NBC News crew came out on the terrace and briefly filmed the dancers, throwing their shadows up against the wall with a Sun Gun light that gave the cameraman the exposure he needed. "Meanwhile, in beleaguered Managua at the center of the political storm, pre-Christmas revels go on as usual among the dwindling middle class." Elvis came on with "Hound Dog"—"You ain't never caught a rabbit and you ain't no friend of mine"—and the dancers' silhouettes kept rhythm with one another on the wall. I wondered what the U.S. Army Rangers would look like climbing over that wall in assault

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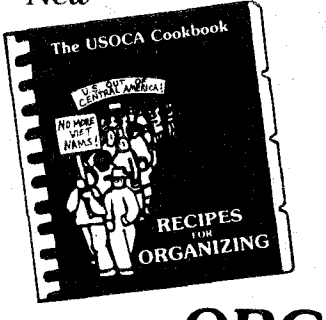

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force. They would be followed by the Marines, of course; twelve-foot walls are nothing to those guys. Together again, the same winning team that brought you Grenada. This time in living color. NBC News went up to bed, the dancers oblivious, grinding Latinly on.

Love You, Hate Your Government

The Intercontinental affords a view of Managua, and beyond it Lake Managua, that is deceptively lush. The palms, the flowers, the poinciana trees and especially the weeds grow back so quickly it is hard to tell that beneath the green camouflage is a destroyed city. Since the hotel is a cluttered pleasure to live in, it too is a kind of disguise for what lies beyond. When I checked in I was given a cell of a room but easily got it changed. I fantasized the Ugly American speech, a facsimile of which I once heard ranted in Havana: Look *señorita*, I've seen better countries than yours blow away like dust when a determined President wants to stop the spread of anything further to the left than right center field. Iran 1953. Guatemala 1954, honey. Chile 1973. El Salvador today. Bay of Pigs 1961; they stopped us on the one-yard line only because our nerve failed. O.K., Saigon 1975; we wouldn't walk the last mile. So if you want your little fight-for-life reported favorably you'll bloody well give me a bigger room. The Pegler school of journalism. At the Caravelle in Saigon, the biggies, the press vets, the World War II and Korea freaks would sit in the bar on the top floor, telling stories of real wars and complaining that Vietnam wasn't worth their attention even though we *were* winning. Later on at the Intercontinental, I did see a reporter give a patented Ugly American performance that froze the entire lobby. In my case they choked off protest abruptly with the Commie ruse of a bigger room.

Fantasies disappear at the Intercontinental's front door. Managua is not exactly patrolled by soldiers, but the country is on a wartime footing, and armed police or militia or members of the regular army are posted in various spots around town, some obviously strategic, others apparently random. A block from the hotel on my first day in Nicaragua, I was halted by a soldier with a rifle. The rifle was strapped loosely around his shoulder and he was smiling, but unaccustomed as I am to being stopped by people with guns, I put my hands up. He fiddled with the rifle barrel playfully as he asked for my identification, sticking a finger down the muzzle. For a reason I did not then understand but would in a minute, I had an impulse to tell him to be careful, that thing was not a toy. But I shut up and produced a passport and a press card. The soldier fingered his rifle some more and called over his superior, who was standing a few yards away. The commander looked at the identification, smiled and told me I could go.

The crisis behind us, I asked them how old they were, and when they answered I understood why I had wanted to warn the soldier about the lethal quality of his weapon. The one who stopped me was 13, the one in charge 17. The 13-year-old was carrying a Russian BZM-52; the 17-year-old had an AK-47, the standard Russian weapon of the Nicaraguan Army, known to everyone as an Ahka. Francisco, the younger one, was eager to be liked and seemed almost ready to ask me for a candy bar. He has had his uniform and rifle a little less than a year. Javier, the senior authority, has been practicing with his Ahka for two years and hopes someday to become a carpenter. "When President Reagan lets us study and work," he said, "instead of defending our homes."

This theme, sounded first by a 17-year-old, was repeated to me often enough to become more than a refrain. It is a tenet of the national faith that the reason for Nicaragua's slow advance in education and industry is the militarism forced on its population by the United States. Extending the tenet, many Nicaraguans blame U.S. economic and military policies for virtually all the country's problems—whether product shortages, poor distribution, bad crops or unrest among the Miskito Indians and other minorities. The United States, they feel, is trying to strangle them. In a crowning paradox, however, they are able to like Americans while hating our government. It is as though they believe our government is not an expression of the national will but something imposed on us from without, as earlier governments in Nicaragua had been imposed by the United States. In talks with hundreds of Nicaraguans, I met only one, a professional army man from the North, who felt we were responsible for our government. Everyone else blamed the Administration, generally Ronald Reagan himself, for policies that have placed as many as 5,500 U.S. military personnel in Honduras, Nicaragua's northern neighbor, hostile armies of counterrevolutionaries on both their Honduran and Costa Rican borders, American warships patrolling their Atlantic and Pacific coasts, and an economic squeeze that not only cuts off Nicaragua's credits from the United States but denies it the opportunity to borrow from the International Monetary Fund and regional banks. Everyone else, beginning with these two teen-agers, Francisco and Javier, exonerated the American people, with whom they wanted only to be friendly, for the acts committed in our name by our leadership. Francisco and Javier left me wondering how much longer we were going to be able to get away with that.

The Miskito Problem

Outside Managua it is easier to get a sense of how the revolution is doing in its struggle against both poverty and the tenacity with which some Nicaraguans cling to their prerevolutionary ways. Nicaragua is approximately the size of Wisconsin, a little larger than New York State. More than 90 percent of the country's population lives in the western provinces and is descended from the Spaniards, who first settled the area in 1524 and ruled until 1821. But 30,000 Miskito Indians, never assimilated into the Spanish society of the West, live on the East Coast, along with several thousand Caribbean blacks and other Indians. If that section of Nicaragua acknowledged a colonial master it

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was England, which traded and pirated along the East Coast, not Spain, which periodically tried to conquer it.

The Sandinistas admit mistakes in their treatment of the Miskitos. These were due, they claim, largely to their overzealousness in trying to integrate the Indians into the revolutionary process, and to American propaganda and military pressure designed to alienate the Miskitos from the government and drive them into the arms of the counterrevolutionaries. Radio broadcasts and leaflets from Honduras tell the Miskitos the Communists are coming to kill them and send all their children to Russia. While I was in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas made a peace offering to the Miskitos, granting amnesty to those who had gone to Honduras and releasing 300 who had been imprisoned for fighting the government. Meanwhile, the C.I.A. was arming the Misura, a dissident faction of Miskitos and other East Coast groups, for the purpose of leading thousands of Indians away from Nicaragua. Propaganda from Honduras increased, with promises of American-style housing for Miskitos who cross the border.

From a C.I.A. perspective, the Miskitos and the East Coast are the Vietnamese Montagnards and the Central Highlands redux. The area in northeast Nicaragua where most of the Miskitos live is even called the highlands. The Miskitos have always been alienated from whatever government was in Managua, just as the Montagnards always ignored Saigon, and they are perfect targets for an enemy intelligence agency to recruit and run for a while, then drop when they are no longer useful. Through their revolutionary excesses, ignorance of Miskito ways and undoubtedly some prejudice against aborigines, the Sandinistas have helped the C.I.A. make friends among the Miskitos. Last December, the government was trying to correct its mistakes, or at least was making overtures to the Miskitos. Several new villages were opened, old villages were being resettled and the land reform program was being significantly extended to benefit the Miskitos.

One morning during my first week in Nicaragua a woman from the government press office, which the Sandinistas have shrewdly located, like a fishnet, in the Intercontinental, asked if I would go to the East Coast the following day with the 300 Miskito Indians who were being repatriated. She said their villages were protected by government troops, secure from attacks by the counterrevolutionaries, *los contras*. The Indians would be free to build new lives for themselves. I felt too busy to join what smelled like a press junket to what sounded like a bunch of strategic hamlets, so I turned the trip down. An American lawyer, however, visiting Nicaragua to investigate human rights violations, went along and remained eight days on the East Coast with the Miskitos.

When she returned to Managua, the lawyer told of a thinly populated, exotic Miskito coast, where coconut palms sway over villages of houses on stilts. The lawyer, who, like many Americans in Nicaragua, insisted on anonymity, was able to reach some of the settlements only by boat. In several of them, books and doctors were unknown until recently. The older communities are filthy, she said, and people often defecate upstream from where they do their laundry. There is a kind of random farming but almost no other organized economic activity. Into these conditions the

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Sandinistas were trying to insert themselves, introducing a little hygiene here, a few modern crop techniques there, rectifying their earlier errors where they could.

One village had been previously evacuated by the Sandinistas in order to deny a haven to the *contras*. The Miskitos the lawyer was with were glad to get home, and their new government-built houses were better than the shacks and lean-tos they had left. But a number of them were afraid of the government because of its past treatment of them, and the lawyer found that when she used a Sandinista interpreter who spoke Miskito, the Indians were far less communicative than when she used a Miskito interpreter who spoke English. The Miskitos told the lawyer of harassment and arrests by the government. In a small settlement along the coast called Walpasixa, the Sandinistas apparently arrested half the men and just carted them away. No one knew why the Sandinistas left the other half alone. Many Miskitos once worked for U.S. lumber companies, which arrived in the 1930s, took all the pine they could find and got out in the 1960s. Some have not been employed since the lumber companies left. In successive villages the lawyer met Miskitos named George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Washington hated the Sandinistas; Lincoln was satisfied with them. This part of Nicaragua, the Miskitos and the government agree, is a war zone, and no one is safe from roving bands of *contras*, down from Honduras, up from Costa Rica. The lawyer returned to Managua with her sympathy for the Sandinistas tested but intact.

The East Coast remains fickle. Just before Christmas, an American bishop accompanied several hundred Miskitos north into Honduras, presenting the counterrevolutionaries with a considerable public relations victory. Some of the Miskitos were said to be armed members of the antigovernment Misura; others were said to have gone north reluctantly, bewildered at being moved one more time. In Managua the rumor was that the Misura had got lost in the jungle on their way to raid one village and wound up in another. This village contained the bishop and an American Catholic priest, who said later they were there by coincidence when the Misura arrived and took everyone north. In any case, the bishop, whom the Sandinistas initially reported killed by counterrevolutionaries, was evacuated to the United States in time to spend the holidays with his mother and receive the winning-coach-in-the-locker-room phone call from President Reagan on Christmas Day. Over the enterprise there hung confusion, missed opportunities for both sides, conflicting loyalties, and the whiff of a bungled C.I.A. operation that accidentally succeeded.

Enter AIM and Others

American Indians have not neglected the Miskitos, with somewhat mixed results. An American Indian Movement official breezed into the Intercontinental one day early in December, took a quick briefing and emerged to declare that the Sandinistas are the best thing that ever happened to the Miskitos. The government treats the Miskitos, the AIM man said, far better than the United States has ever treated *its* Native American population. Then he breezed out again.

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He did not endear himself to the Miskitos and was regarded as unhelpful by the Sandinistas. Not many people, on the other hand, would go to the trouble of a 4,000-mile trip just to get better trajectory for a shot at the U.S. Interior Department.

A few days later, a delegation of Vietnam veterans arrived. They looked around, talked to as many people as they could and decided that while Nicaragua was not Vietnam, the United States was behaving in a similar manner, blending cruelty with ignorance. "We're not going to go through this again," one of them said. The delegation included an American Indian, who asked stern and probing questions of the Sandinistas and the Miskitos about their intentions toward each other. He won the respect of both.

Since the western provinces hold most of Nicaragua's population, including 15,000 who have migrated from the East to find jobs, it is in the West that the revolution will stand or fall. After Managua, which has approximately 300,000 people, the largest cities are León, 63,000, and Granada, 45,000. Population figures in Nicaragua are rough estimates, since no census has been taken for more than a decade. One of the problems the government confronts in preparing for the elections scheduled for 1985 is that no one has a clear idea of who or where the potential voters are, never mind how many of them exist.

Historic León

Fifty-five miles northwest of Managua, León was the capital during a bizarre episode in the 1850s, when an American pirate named William Walker conquered Nicaragua and tried to have it annexed to the United States as a slave state. Walker made the mistake of confiscating a business owned by Cornelius Vanderbilt. For most of the decade Vanderbilt had been running a transit company through Nicaragua for Americans hurrying from the Eastern states to what they hoped was the gold in California. His profits were $2 million a year, an irresistible lure for Walker. A coalition of Central American countries and the British Navy, helped by Vanderbilt, drove Walker out of his "kingdom." When he tried to return in 1860, he was executed by the Hondurans.

Walker and Vanderbilt forecast an American attitude toward Nicaragua that lasted more than a century. Statecraft was reduced to business, business to exploitation. Guided less by Jefferson's devotion to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness than by his assertion, in 1813, that "America has a hemisphere to itself," the United States made coffee and bananas the pedestals for its Central America policy. The U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua became at times a virtual governor general. When a nationalist leader cooperated with the British in a plan to build a trans-Nicaraguan railway that would compete with the then-unfinished Panama Canal, Washington declared him a "destabilizing" influence and overthrew him in 1909. Thereafter, except for two brief periods, the United States Marines were in Nicaragua until 1933. Then came Somoza I, followed by Somozas II and III, lasting until the Sandinista revolution of 1979.

The fall of William Walker shifted the country's capital

Batik by Lisa Kokin

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to Managua, but León still has the dignity of a gracefully retired athlete who now and then condescends to do a coffee commercial. Its eighteenth-century cathedral, the largest in Central America, is said to have been built by mistake after the Spanish design for an elegant cathedral to be constructed in the gold-rich capital of Lima, Peru, was mixed up aboard ship with the plans for a more modest church in León. The cathedral preens over its city with an opulence that refutes the revolution, and confirms it.

The morning I was in León, a sound truck drove by the cathedral, blasting out instructions for a civil defense meeting where trench digging, firefighting and evacuation techniques would be taught in preparation for the Yankee invasion. The announcer, visible in the front seat of the truck, emphasized that the meeting would begin at 9 A.M. I looked at my watch and saw it was a little after 10:30. This is what is meant by *hora Nica*, Nicaraguan time. Meetings not only start late, they occasionally do not take place even on the day they are scheduled. The sound truck proceeded around León, past an open bazaar, the ancient university, shops, and signs advertising Pepsi, Coke, Black & Decker tools and "Death to hoarding and speculating."

Across the street on one side of the cathedral is an adjacent pair of political statements typical of Nicaraguan cities. First, there are the gutted remains of a department store bombed by Somoza's Guardia Nacional during heavy fighting in 1978. Twisted metal girders are all that separate the earth from the sky. Next to this is a tiny plaza with enlarged photographs of the revolutionary heroes Sandino and Carlos Fonseca, and of the martyr Rigoberto Lopez, the poet who shot Somoza I in León in 1956.

Tales Out of School

On the other side of the cathedral is Collegio La Asunción, formerly an elite parochial academy for girls, now a girls' public school. The school no longer has its curriculum dictated by the church, but it has not embraced the revolution either. Two teachers and a school secretary I spoke with felt the Sandinistas were going backward. One of them left shortly after we began talking—"Wait, I'll show you what I mean," she said—and reappeared with a block of unrefined brown sugar. "See, this is what we have to eat now." It was no use telling her that American health-chic now stipulates raw sugar. The fact is that white sugar has always been a mark of the Nicaraguan middle class, and this science teacher could no longer buy it.

The two teachers described themselves as liberal but not of the left. They were pleasant and perplexed. "Even with the hostility of the United States," one of them said, "there should be more progress four and a half years after the triumph. The government has good intentions, but it is on the wrong path. They give us no way to organize a campaign against their own mistakes."

"When someone has told you three or four lies, the fifth time you don't believe him," the other teacher said. "Nothing good can come of the voting in 1985. There is not enough freedom. You can't even chop a tree down without their permission. This is no atmosphere for organizing elections. Their relationship with the Salvadoran guerrillas compromises us. They should be neutral. Why don't they behave better to get the economic aid from the United States restored?"

"We are not *contras*," the first said. "We want what is best for our *país*, our country, our *patria*."

A nun sitting nearby looked up at the teachers and the secretary, then returned to her Graham Greene paperback, *La Fuerza y La Gloria*.

The secretary had been a student at the school, and her small, neat features drooped when she talked about the revolution. "I can't complain myself," she said, "but the lack of freedom hurts the production of goods. You don't have to be an economist to see the economy is worse now than ten years ago. The U.S. boycott hurts us too, prevents us from making progress. Because of the United States, we have to have so many people involved in defense we can't make what we need. The Sandinistas contribute to this with bad management. Their bomb shelters have broken more legs than they'd save in a raid. People run over the trenches and crack their knees. Some of our teachers have to go pick cotton on their holidays. That's not a proper activity for a teacher. I hated Somoza. The Sandinistas seemed like saints to me when they first came. I loved and supported them. But they let me down, and they don't show proper respect for the United States. They should change, be more friendly to your country, give no excuse for the United States to attack us."

The nun looked up again as she turned a page.

"When the Pope was here in 1982," one of the teachers said, "it was a very painful experience."

"It was *doloroso*," the secretary said. "He was insulted by Sandinistas waving their red and black flags right here in the cathedral square, while he was treated well at the university. How can you figure that? All right, some of my family are Sandinistas. We fight about it, but we're still a family."

The teachers and the secretary left for lunch, and the school door was closed behind me for the midday break as I walked out. But there was a window in the door, barred with thin whitewashed wooden dowels. The little window opened. I had forgotten the nun. She appeared, spectral in the shadows behind the white bars. "*Por favor, señor*," she said, "we do not all feel like that."

The Nun's Story

All I could see of her was white—her face, her nun's coronet, her plain T-shirt. "First, the Pope," she said. "I love him, and the *campesinos* I work with were very happy to have him visit. But he was poorly advised. He should have said something about the *compañeros* who were killed on the border fighting against *los contras*. Just one word. No. He spoke only of the unity of the church. In the way the church can sometimes be, he was too dogmatic."

The nun opened the door and came out on the school steps. She was Sister Ana María Macías, a social worker originally from Spain, now 36 and a Nicaraguan. She has prominent bones and eyes, and a strong nose that manages to suggest both a peasant and an aristocrat. Since the revolution she has been the treasurer of a farm cooperative.

"I'll give this country peace if I have to kill every other man in Nicaragua."

—Anastasio Somoza García, 1933

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"Beans, corn, rice," she said, "I organize the selling of our produce to the markets, and I try to manage the money."

Sister Ana Maria came to Nicaragua before the revolution. "You could not go in the streets after 6 P.M. then," she said. "During Somoza's time, soldiers were everywhere and you could not look at them, not even a nun. They would do anything to you that amused them. At the time when Chamorro the publisher [of *La Prensa*] was killed, it could be worth your life only to walk past the headquarters of the Guardia here in León. Holy Week was full of terror. On the Monday before Easter, the Guardia killed three boys right in front of the church. The rest of the week, disappearances every day.

"But now, see the *vida nueva*, see the betterment. Priests and nuns in Guatemala and El Salvador are killed for doing the kind of work with *campesinos* I do here. The soldiers come up to me on the street and shake my hand. The agricultural co-ops bring us closer to providing for ourselves. There are shortages in some areas, but the revolution never promised Italian olive oil and French wine. The basic foods, the basic goods, we have. The poor people have the necessities they never dreamed of before. The Bishop of León understands this and favors the revolution. So do the Jesuits who come here from the United States. Some of them went home for a visit and were present when Jeane Kirkpatrick spoke at Georgetown. She gave her anti-Sandinista speech. We are all totalitarian pigs, or sheep, or wolves, or whatever beast was in her mind that day. The Jesuits protested quietly, politely, but they let her know how wrong she is about the Nicaragua they know."

What Sister Ana Maria does not admire about the Sandinistas is the way they treat their opponents. "I don't like the neighborhood surveillance groups who harass people they don't agree with," she said. "I don't like the signs that say, 'Counterrevolutionaries, 10,000 eyes are watching you.' When people speak in disagreement with the government, they often try to be funny about perhaps going to jail. The fact is, they do not go to jail, but the possibility is in the air enough so they have to make a little joke about it. I do not like this, but it is the tail of the revolution, not its body. The body is healthy and growing. Tell the United States government, *por favor*, it's all right not to help Nicaragua, but at least don't help the *contras*. Two of our boys from the farm have been killed on the border. We won't let them die in vain."

Appointment in Corinto

I continued on to Corinto, Nicaragua's largest port, about thirty-five miles west of León. Before the revolution sailors would get off their ships, hire Nicaraguan bodyguards known locally as cowboys and make the rounds of bars, card games and brothels without fear of being rolled. Although the Sandinistas have tried to eliminate prostitution and gambling, Corinto is still a busy little city with a market in practically everything. The revolution has not changed the face of the port, but the C.I.A. has.

Corinto is on an island and handles 60 percent of Nicaragua's foreign trade; both facts make it an attractive target for sabotage. The *contras* have tried to blow up the main bridge to the island but so far have failed. The C.I.A. did not fail, however, in its night raid on Corinto's oil storage

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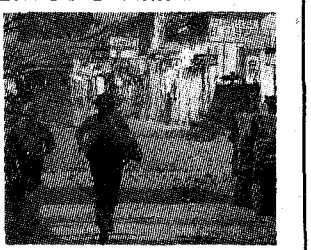

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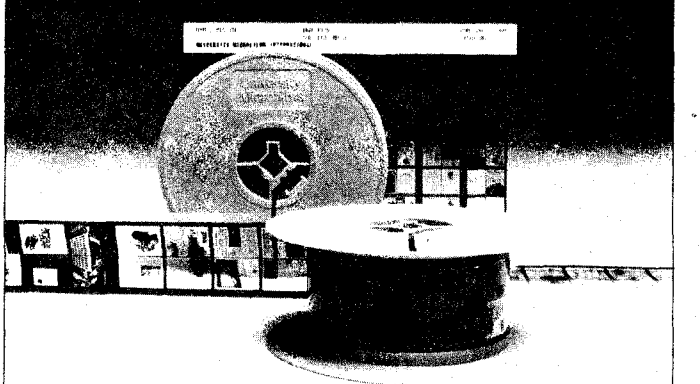

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depot last October. The *contras* had been unable to penetrate the port's defenses with either planes or small ships, so the C.I.A. sent its own speedboat into the harbor. The oil depot was shelled from the speedboat for perhaps two minutes, after which the boat escaped. Four diesel fuel tanks were hit directly. The explosions started fires which eventually destroyed eight tanks and their fuel lines, a loading crane, two molasses storage tanks, a concrete wall, two small buildings and a large warehouse with all its contents, which included coffee, beans and shrimp. Three million gallons of fuel were lost.

The following day, a group of counterrevolutionaries were captured near Corinto. They said that they had been trained for the job but when they could not accomplish it in several attempts, their C.I.A. instructors did it themselves. According to the *contras*, the speedboat had a 325-horsepower engine and used 60-millimeter shells.

The fire burned for forty-eight hours. Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba quickly sent sophisticated firefighting equipment which helped keep the flames from leaping to the bordering residential neighborhood. Diesel fuel is much less incendiary than petroleum. Port officials say that if the petroleum tanks had been hit, Corinto would have burned to the ground. Two of the destroyed tanks belonged to Exxon—business, too, must make its sacrifices for democracy—but the company will not say whether its insurance provides coverage against C.I.A. operations. Although the fire was confined to the storage area, the 3,000 people who live nearby are being relocated to protect them from future U.S. attacks.

In December, the storage depot was moonscape, with sheet metal twisted into five acres of the playful varieties of pasta. Red and green paint lay in flakes on the ground, having passed through the stages of boiling and peeling. When I was there, planes from Honduras had come in low under the radar for three days in a row. They strafed the port and were driven away before they could do further damage to the oil tanks. In international law that is known as repeated violations of airspace accompanied by unprovoked acts of war; in the intelligence community it is called keeping in touch.

Irving Ramos, a 19-year-old with a seventh-grade education, was piling rubble in the depot. Nicaragua can't afford to throw away any metal. "What you have to try to understand," Ramos said, "is that the Nicaraguan government works for the *campesinos* now, instead of the other way around, like it used to be. Your war is good for nothing. If you can't send peace, at least don't send bombs. If you don't send bombs, maybe you'll send books. What about Salinger? I get off early if I go to night school."

On the way out of Corinto, I drove past the statue of a boy holding the enormous letters A, B, C, D. The literacy campaign. Across the bridge, in the twilight, I was stopped by the blinking red lights of a slow convoy of Soviet tractors, unloaded that afternoon in Corinto. When I could pass them, I came to a caravan of Toyota pickups, also new. In front of the Toyotas were Soviet trucks and two Soviet ambulances. Just before the town of Chinandega, where I turned south to get back to Managua, I came to a field hospital built by the Russians, most of it under tents, staffed by Russian doctors, a gift to the Nicaraguans.

The way the United States and the Soviet Union were behaving toward Nicaragua was like the fairy tale about the wind and the sun. The two of them look down at the earth and see a freezing man walking along, wearing an overcoat. They devise a contest to see who can get the coat off the man first. The wind blows hard and almost whisks the coat right off the man's back, but he grabs it and hugs it tightly around him. The wind swirls around, huffs and puffs some more, but nothing works. It is the sun's turn. He shines brightly for a few minutes. The man removes his overcoat and continues walking.

The question is, Why do we have to be the wind in this story? □

TERMINAL EL SALVADOR

Death Squads, D'Aubuisson & 'Democracy'

ANNE NELSON AND CYNTHIA ARNSON

A student of politics visiting El Salvador for the first time in five years would find a number of things surprisingly the same—despite the 40,000 lives lost and the billion dollars in U.S. aid spent since the October 1979 coup. Constituent Assembly President Roberto d'Aubuisson is still a major political figure, and when he brands someone a "subversive," it can mean death at the hands of "unknown individuals dressed as civilians," as the Salvadoran press puts it. The Christian Democrats still promote reforms and enjoy popular support, but an electoral victory for them could be thwarted by fraud or a right-wing coup. The United States again appears to be supporting the Party of National Conciliation, the corrupt old alliance of the military right. Peasants and unions still feel locked out of the electoral process, and death squads still wipe out those who try to enfranchise the poor.

But if the similarities are striking, so are the differences. While the U.S. presence is greater than ever, El Salvador's armed guerrillas—a desperate and tiny group of bickering factions in 1979—have been unified into an effective fighting force. During their offensive last fall, they attacked more than 130 towns, held onto more than fifty and extended their control to six of El Salvador's fourteen provinces.

Obviously, the situation is precisely what the United States hoped to forestall in late 1979. The triumph of the Nicaraguan rebels evoked a panic in Washington similar to that which the triumph of Cuban rebels had twenty years before, and the United States turned to neighboring countries with the same urgent impulse to head off the left by simultaneously mounting modest reforms and counterinsurgency campaigns. In El Salvador, it pressed for land reform and human rights policies, bolstered the historically abused

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Christian Democratic Party, sent massive military aid and attempted to boost the Salvadoran armed forces' morale and overhaul their command structure.

The end of 1983 brought stinging setbacks to U.S. policy on each of those fronts. When, after months of haggling, the Constituent Assembly acted on land redistribution, the measure, pushed through by the right-wing coalition, effectively gutted Phase II of the program, which covers El Salvador's most valuable land holdings. Until recently, much of the U.S. concern for human rights in El Salvador has centered around the cases of the four U.S. missionaries and two labor leaders assassinated there. The investigations and prosecutions have been subject to endless delays, and it seems unlikely that the murderers will be convicted in a Salvadoran court.

The biggest blow to human rights has been the major resurgence in death squad activity, which has coincided with indications that the Salvadoran right may be losing ground—the guerrillas' successful offensive and Presidential envoy Richard Stone's feelers to the Democratic Revolutionary Front (F.D.R.) and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.), among them. The death squad strikes, executed with a sense of panic, seem calculated to reassert anticommunist principles and eliminate anyone in a position to facilitate peace talks.

The church and the trade unions have continued to press for reforms and progress in human rights—many of the same goals the United States has—and the persecution they have suffered is a distinct embarrassment to the Administration. Vice President George Bush and U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering have denounced the death squads in harsh language but have been undercut by statements from President Reagan and others to the effect that guerrillas impersonating rightists are actually to blame. Toward the end of 1983 the embassy took matters further: in a series of leaks to the U.S. press, anonymous embassy personnel named a group of Salvadoran Army officers as death squad members, demanding that they be dismissed and exiled. Some observers maintain that the exercise was mounted to show "improvement" even as the President was asking Congress for unprecedented quantities of military aid. But no one believes that the removal of a handful of officers will end death squad activity in El Salvador.

The last major item on the U.S. political agenda, the March elections, is faring poorly. Christian Democratic candidate José Napoleón Duarte is running a close race against ARENA candidate Roberto d'Aubuisson; Party of National Conciliation candidate Francisco José Guerrero, the tacit favorite of the United States, is trailing. Duarte's chances have been weakened by the business community's animosity toward him, and the listless support of his party's conservative wing is another liability. The ambitious young Foreign Minister, Fidel Chávez Mena, has longstanding ties to business and at one point considered dividing the party. D'Aubuisson, on the other hand, carried his party's nomination in defiance of the wishes of the United States. He has been involved in at least three coup attempts since 1980, and his political supporters would probably rather see him lead another than have the country return to Christian Democratic rule.

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Whether he seeks more power through an election or through a coup, d'Aubuisson counts a number of elements in his favor. Most important is the shake-up in the military high command that has been taking place since last April. Minister of Defense Gen. Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova has made dutiful statements against the death squads recently, but it is widely believed that his power has been supplanted by a triumvirate of officers sympathetic to d'Aubuisson. Col. Juan Bustillo, head of the air force, Col. Adolfo Blandón, army Chief of Staff, and Col. Nicolás Carranza, head of the Treasury Police—known collectively as "B.B.C."—share the ARENA leader's belief in the "Guatemalan model." The gospel of d'Aubuisson's mentor, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, the leader of Guatemala's extreme right, holds that national dignity should not be sold for U.S. aid: a guerrilla war is a dirty war, and human rights requirements merely tie the hands of the military and subject the country to the most pernicious form of U.S. interventionism.

The armed forces are desperately looking for tactics to halt the guerrillas' stunning advances and boost their own lagging morale. Only two months into the guerrillas' fall 1983 offensive, they attacked an area thirty-seven miles north of the capital and drove government troops into a nearby town, where they changed into civilian clothes. In November an entire company of 135 soldiers surrendered rather than fight. In December the guerrillas grew bolder and escalated the frequency of their attacks, leveling the U.S.-designed base at El Paraíso and destroying the Cuscatlán Bridge on the Pan-American Highway, the country's crucial east-west economic and military artery.

At the same time, the guerrillas have effectively healed the rifts they suffered during their 1981 offensive. With the death of intransigent leader Cayetano Carpio in Managua last April, the Popular Liberation Forces, the largest of the Salvadoran guerrilla groups, painfully reconsidered its opposition to negotiations, and is carrying out successful joint operations with the other guerrilla organizations.

The continued deterioration of the situation in El Salvador is a distasteful prospect for Washington. If the guerrillas continue to advance, the United States may back an invasion from Honduras, involving Guatemalan and Honduran troops, among others. If so, the Reagan Administration could find itself in the unlikely and uncomfortable position of intervening in behalf of a "democracy" with Roberto d'Aubuisson as its duly elected head of state, assuming he wins in March. If d'Aubuisson is defeated, legitimately or otherwise, Washington could justify intervention as a blow against both left-wing insurgents and a possible right-wing coup. Either way, anyone hoping for a surgical, Grenada-style operation will be disappointed. The war would be ugly and long.

Shortly before the 1982 Salvadoran elections, a reporter asked d'Aubuisson what his favorite book was. He hesitated barely a moment. "*The Devil's Advocate* and Richard Nixon's memoirs," he answered. The Reagan Administration should bear in mind that d'Aubuisson, like Nixon, has a talent for rising like a phoenix from the political ashes. But eventually, like Nixon, he must fall and take everyone with him. □

FORTRESS HONDURAS

Delivering A Country to The Military

GEORGE BLACK

Sometimes a photograph tells the whole story. Last August, after President Roberto Suazo Córdova suffered two heart attacks, the Honduran government issued an official photograph of him, tubby and middle-aged, in striped pajamas, smiling gamely from his hospital bed. Standing around him in a semicircle were the granite-faced military chiefs of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and the U.S. Southern Command in Panama.

During the campaign that led to his landslide victory two years ago in Honduras's first election in a decade, Suazo's public relations team made great play of his background as a small-town doctor to prove his populism and integrity. Now, people in Tegucigalpa joke about the "sick man" of Central America.

According to Manuel Gamero, editor of the liberal daily *Tiempo* and one of the few dissidents still willing to stick his neck out, the November 1981 election was "a vote against corruption, against the presence of the military in power. It was in favor of a change of political style, in favor of neutrality in the regional war." In two years' time, he says with evident distress, "it has brought just the opposite."

Responsibility for the rot in Honduras lies with Washington. U.S. military personnel seem to be everywhere, and with them have come the familiar images of an occupied country. Some of the soldiers now in the country for the Ahuas Tara II maneuvers—the largest ever held in Central America, involving 5,500 troops at the height of the exercise—can watch cable TV movies in their hotel rooms in the luxurious Honduras Maya, soft-core porn classics like *Emmanuelle* on one channel, *Pork Chop Hill* on another. Those billeted at the spartan Palmerola command base have to make do with simpler entertainment: one photographer returned from Thanksgiving Day at Palmerola open-mouthed at the spectacle of Green Berets dressed up in clown costumes, handing out toys to 150 poor kids bused in from the nearby town of Comayagua. The Honduran medical community is debating about the cause of an upsurge in the venereal disease rate. Vietnam Rose, say some, citing a particularly virulent strain supposedly imported by U.S. troops. No, say others, just good old-fashioned Honduran gonorrhea.

Beneath the surface bickering, the impact of the U.S. presence in Honduras has been deeply corrosive. Until 1979, U.S. policy toward Honduras was one of benign neglect. All

George Black is editor of NACLA Report on the Americas *and author of the forthcoming book* Garrison Guatemala. *He has made two trips to Honduras in the last four months.*

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that changed with the shock of the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua. That September, then-Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Viron P. Vaky delineated Honduras's new geopolitical role as an anticommunist bulwark to replace Somoza, but with one crucial difference: it would be a democracy. The credentials of the incoming Honduran government would have to be unimpeachable. In return for vacating the presidential palace (which it was glad to do, given its incompetence and unpopularity), the military would be rewarded with generous U.S. aid, enhancing its power inside Honduras and bolstering the country's role as a U.S. regional ally.

Until the November 1981 election, there was remarkable continuity between Carter's and Reagan's policies in Honduras. But that month, the National Security Council approved covert action against Nicaragua and began to study overt military operations. The Administration upgraded the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, and installed Henry Kissinger's protégé and Cambodia veteran John Dimitri Negroponte as Ambassador. Honduras became the operational center for the secret war and Negroponte was its overlord.

First, Honduras was made the buffer against the Salvadoran guerrillas and the springboard for *contra* attacks on Nicaragua. Next came the effort to build Honduras into a U.S. fighting surrogate and military base. Honduras became the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in Central America, after El Salvador. This year Honduras will receive $41 million, almost all of it under the no-strings-attached Military Assistance Program. The Ahuas Tara maneuvers have served as a cover for military construction—lengthening airstrips, installing a radar station and, to evade Congressional restrictions on the number of U.S. advisers in the country, constructing a training center for Salvadoran troops in Puerto Castilla.

The most alarming feature of the Administration's policy is that it rides roughshod over Honduran political realities. Intoxicated by their own rhetoric that Honduras is an island of peace in a sea of violence, U.S. strategists have spent the last two years frittering away their best asset, the frail rudiments of democracy. "Beneath the facade of democracy," says Efraín Diaz, Honduras's lone Christian Democratic Congressman and a kind of one-man national conscience, "is the authoritarian reality of the national security state." It could hardly be otherwise, given Honduras's role as an instrument of the global anticommunist crusade.

The country is effectively run by an unholy alliance of the United States and the hard-line rightists, led by Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, who now control the Honduran armed forces. When he assumed his position in July 1982, Alvarez set about purging Honduras of "alien ideologies." He formed strategic alliances with key civilian groups. With the ruling Liberal Party and the secret police, Alvarez formed a network of so-called civil defense committees to inform on suspected communists. "The peasants' and workers' organizations and the university are all infiltrated by communists," Santiago Gradiz, Political Governor of the capital department, Francisco Morazán, told me. How, I asked, can his informers identify the enemy? "Oh, it's easy," said Gradiz. "You can tell a communist by the way

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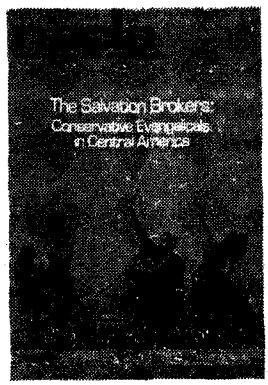

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he acts, the way he speaks. You don't need to ask anyone; it's obvious."

The crowning achievement of Alvarez's efforts is his alliance with the right-wing business leader Miguel Facussé in the Association for the Progress of Honduras (APROH), of which Alvarez is president. "A clearly fascist project," *Tiempo* editor Gamero calls this military–private sector axis, a radical new anticommunist elite that disdains parliamentary channels. On September 23, APROH leaders met in Miami with a personal representative of Kissinger, Rudolph Petersen, and insisted that the only solution to the region's problems is "the military overthrow of the Sandinista government . . . in an urgent period of no more than three to six months."

As that period ticks away, the inescapable conclusion is that Honduras is being readied to serve as the base for a sustained U.S. combat presence in the region. The fiction that Honduras still functions as a sovereign country is part of the tragicomedy. Alvarez theatrically offers the press his personal helicopter to travel to the Nicaraguan border to find proof of the *contras*' presence in Honduras, which he absolutely denies. And the crisp, concerned colonels from the U.S. Southern Command stroke their chins in a parody of thoughtfulness when a journalist requests details about the new U.S.-built radar facility. "We really don't have information on that," they say. "You'd have to ask the Hondurans."

The Honduran authorities are more sanguine about their likely fate. When the Kissinger commission came to Tegucigalpa, it was presented with a 100-page government report concluding that Honduran "democracy" has two options if the Sandinista government is not overthrown. One is to become a frontier garrison in the new cold war, with a large permanent detachment of U.S. troops. The other is to accept commonwealth status. The bets are on: Honduras as South Korea or Honduras as Puerto Rico? □

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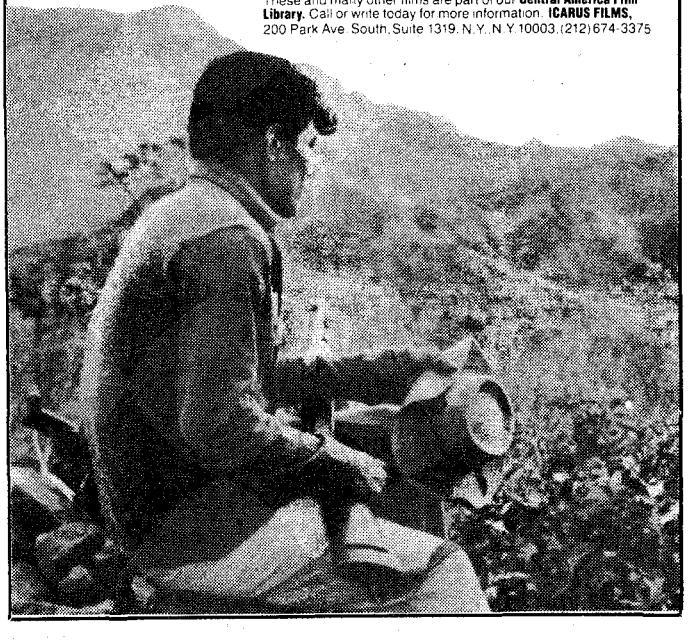

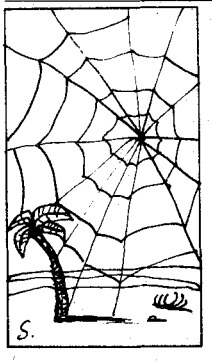

GUATEMALA UNDER SIEGE

Chaos in the Scorched Earth

VICTOR PERERA

As Guatemala's lawmakers prepare a new Constitution with guidelines for a presidential election to be held in 1985, most of its citizens remain in the grip of a "coup psychosis." And small wonder: the people have lived through a fraud-ridden presidential election and two military *golpes* (coups) in the past two years. The accompanying violence has claimed at least 5,000 lives, the great majority of those Indians massacred in outlying highland villages by the army's special anti-insurgency forces, the *kaibiles*.

The *abertura*, or democratic opening, announced by the new chief of state, Brig. Gen. Oscar Mejía Víctores, who overthrew the eccentric fundamentalist Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt last August, already shows cracks and strains. Candidates of all major parties have attacked the proposed electoral laws for heavily favoring the military and Mejía Víctores himself, who recently consolidated his power by retiring rival generals Arana Osorio, Lucas García and Ríos Montt—all of whom are former presidents, as it happens.

Victor Perera, who has just returned from Guatemala, is co-author with Robert Bruce of The Last Lords of Palenque: The Lacandon Mayas of the Mexican Rain Forest *(Little, Brown).*

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Many Guatemalan voters, fearful and cynical after the wo coups, expect the military to stage another during he contending parties' pre-election machinations. Most thers feel it will make no difference who wins the next election, even if one is held. "It will be the same shit as always," oes a colorful refrain. "The situation is beyond repair."

According to a recent poll taken by a Guatemalan radio tation, only 10 percent of the population expects the election to be free of fraud. "Elections are to impress the ringos," a prosperous businessman said. "It's the only way ve can get U.S. foreign aid again. But we'll get by in any ase. We have the Israelis and the Taiwanese."

As violence returns to the capital and other large cities, nd guerrilla activity picks up in the countryside, there are umors of a possible comeback by Ríos Montt. He is redited with having imposed order in the capital while purjing a massive anti-insurgency campaign in the highlands vhich temporarily quelled guerrilla activity by wiping out a arge part of its peasant base.

Under Ríos Montt's campaign, hundreds of thousands of *ampesinos* who were subjected to the army's scorched-arth policies fled across the border into Mexico, where they ıave strained that country's traditional hospitality to politial fugitives. At least a half-million others have become inernal refugees, and great numbers of them are still hiding ıut under desperate conditions in remote ravines and mountain fastnesses.

Those who have dared return to their homes are crowded nto "model villages," sanitized concentration camps where he "guerrilla-contaminated" are weeded out and executed ıy neighbors who belong to the infamous government-run ivil patrols.

The economic surge of the mid-1970s made multimillionires of several dozen politicians, industrialists and planters, s well as a handful of generals who took over vast tracts of ıil-rich property in the Northern Transversal. None of their ırosperity trickled down to Guatemala's 4 million Indians, vhose standard of living declined during the 1970s. The ıard-won $3.20 minimum daily wage finally adopted by the ;overnment in 1980 has been widely ignored by planters and actory owners, who still pay around $2 a day.

Guatemala today has the feel of a sacked country caught n a downward spiral. Gone are the bright promise, zeal or enterprise and ambitious public works of four or five ears ago. The giant hydroelectric plants, the network of uperhighways, the new schools and hospitals, the fifteentory showcase towers on the shores of Lake Atitlan—all hese have been abandoned or are closed and in disrepair ıfter government and private contractors bilked millions rom gullible, newly rich investors, and then hightailed it to Miami or Switzerland.

Unemployment is estimated to be between 33 and 43 perent, the highest rate in memory, although the machinery to ake an accurate census has never been in place; illiteracy remains constant at around 70 percent; the G.N.P. fell 3.5 percent in the past year and the once rock-solid quetzal, vhich stayed on a par with the dollar for decades, is now worth about 70 cents on the open market. There are rumors of an impending devaluation. Unfavorable travel advisories n the United States and Europe have severely reduced ourism, formerly a prime source of revenue, to its lowest evel since World War II.

DEATH OF A COMMUNITY

Nowhere are the economic and social consequences of political repression in Guatemala more evident than in the *cantones* around the small city of Santa Cruz del Quiché, capital of Quiché department. Like most highlanders, the people there are Maya Indians. They speak their own language, Quiché, and the women wear native dress. But their culture is threatened. The infant mortality rate is high; people frequently die of curable diseases; nutrition is inadequate; illiteracy is widespread.

The government's savage policies have eradicated a decade of hard-won progress in the area. During the 1950s and 1960s, the peasants had little land. Seventy-five percent of the farms in the *municipio* were not large enough to support a family. Many Indians worked on lowland plantations, harvesting crops for export. They lived in crowded *galeras* (open sheds) and earned about a dollar a day. In the 1970s the Indians' living conditions gradually improved, partly because the nearby departmental capital built a hospital and a secondary school and began regular bus service. A new paved highway connected Santa Cruz with Guatemala City, a hundred miles to the southeast. But much of the improvement was due to the people's own efforts through community action groups sponsored by the Catholic Church. They formed numerous cooperatives—for credit and savings, consumer buying, agricultural and industrial production. Prior to that, the Indians had few institutions other than the family and the village. The experience of working together instilled in them confidence and hope.

The government, however, regarded the cooperatives as revolutionary and decided to eliminate them. Catholic priests were harassed and a number of them were murdered; in July 1980 the church was forced to abandon the area. That same year, several leaders of the co-op movement were also murdered, and the army swept through the countryside, killing people, burning crops. The repression has continued and scarcely a household in Santa Cruz has not felt its effects—a death, a disappearance, people fleeing for their lives. The hope and confidence are gone, replaced by reserve, fear and suffering.

Social life is concentrated in the household unit, which scrabbles to survive. The men are impressed into the army and obligatory civil patrols, which monitor all movements in the community; government informers attend church services and all public gatherings. The economy is in disarray; money is so scarce that farmers cannot buy fertilizer and insecticides, and many have returned to migrant labor on the lowlands.

The message is clear: community action is dangerous; speaking out is synonymous with rebellion. Docility is the price of survival.

—Adapted from "A Nation of Prisoners," a forthcoming Americas Watch report on Guatemala.

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A depressed economy is only one of Guatemala's mounting troubles. There is a sense of betrayed expectations that extends well beyond the private sector, the corrupt politicians and the military leaders. The Indians and the guerrillas are also accusing each other of betrayal, and there have been ugly recriminations and acts of vengeance. Many Indian youths recruited in the highlands by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor were left stranded when the government repression came down hard; others, who were paid to support guerrilla groups, deserted them in terror when the *kaibiles* massacred their neighbors.

As a result of those incidents, three of the four guerrilla organizations that make up the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union appear to have stopped actively recruiting Indians. Only the Guerrilla Army of the Poor remains committed to Indian participation in the movement.

The Rebel Armed Forces and the Guatemalan Workers' Party have revived their successful urban tactics of the 1960s and 1970s. They recently kidnapped the editor of *Prensa Libre*, a prominent newspaper, and the sister of Mejía Víctores, holding them until the paper ran a P.G.T. manifesto.

In the capital, kidnappings and assassinations are on the rise, after a brief respite during Ríos Montt's abbreviated presidency. Trained killers are so plentiful that one can be hired for as little as $200. Nearly everyone has a relative who has been kidnapped, a car that has been hijacked or stolen, a house that has been broken into at least once. The luxury homes of wealthy kidnap victims who abandoned the country after being ransomed can be rented at bargain prices.

The state-of-siege mentality has returned to the capital with Mejía Víctores's pledge of "police vigilance on every block." There were 630 arrests without warrants during a two-week period in November, and fifteen politicians taking part in the pre-election preparations were either kidnapped or murdered. Other prominent victims of government violence have been Indian linguists trained by the U.S. Agency for International Development. At least four have been killed or have disappeared since October, crippling a commendable A.I.D. literacy program for the Indians.

Hardly anyone expects Mejía Víctores to last in office if the election is not held on schedule, and even fewer expect that there will be any improvement whoever leads the country. "We need a *campesino* to be elected president, like Mexico's Benito Juárez," said an educated Indian youth from Quiché, who works in a Guatemala City bank. Then he shook his head. "But all the potential Juárezes are killed before they can mature."

The most visible casualties of Guatemala's sustained violence against the Indians are the thousands of orphans in the highland provinces. Only a few hundred of these children are being fed and cared for, in four privately funded day-care centers, where even the most severely undernourished respond to warm food and attention. The government refuses to provide aid to these centers because most of the children's fathers were killed for associating with "subversives." Ironically, those war orphans are one of the few rays of hope in the country's generally bleak future, for they are reminders of the extraordinary resilience of the Guatemalan Indians, whose communal bonds remain the only stable tradition amid the growing chaos and disintegration. □

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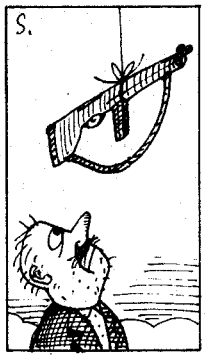

'MODEL' COSTA RICA

Class War in The Latin Switzerland

GEOFFREY FOX

Costa Rica, the oldest continuous parliamentary democracy in Central America, is the only country in the region whose Constitution prohibits an army. But that thirty-five-year-old provision is threatened by economic woes and pressures for militarization.

Per capita, Costa Rica's 2.5 million people receive the eleventh-highest amount of U.S. economic aid of any country in the world, but the $110 million for fiscal 1984 is not nearly enough, considering the country's problems. The public debt of $1.3 billion (as of December 1982) is nearly 85 percent of the gross national product, a far higher proportion than Brazil's 44.3 percent or Mexico's 39.9 percent. Costa Rica restructured its privately held debt last September, but it is obligated to pay about $35 million a month, which it cannot afford without further borrowing. The International Monetary Fund has agreed to a loan package, but the austerity measures it demands—laying off 3,300 public employees, cutting the budget for higher education and raising taxes—hit the middle-class supporters of the governing National Liberation Party (N.L.P.) hardest.

According to former Costa Rican Vice President José Miguel Alfaro, U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick told Costa Rican officials in 1981 that they would have to raise an army if they wanted continued economic assistance. Acceding to that demand would not only be unconstitutional, it would arouse strong opposition among Costa Rica's well-educated, articulate and highly organized voters. Instead, President Luis Alberto Monge has given strong support to U.S. policies in the region, denouncing communism and sponsoring international conferences on peace and democracy to which Nicaraguans were not invited. He has also accepted the U.S. Army's offer to build a network of military roads along the jungle border with Nicaragua. At the same time, he has refused to abandon the pacifist principles in the Constitution. Last September 15, on Independence Day, he declared that Costa Rica would remain

Geoffrey Fox, a fellow of the New York Research Program in Inter-American Affairs at New York University, is a contributing editor of Hispanic Monitor.

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"perpetually and actively neutral" in all armed conflicts anywhere in the world and would never rearm.

Nevertheless, since 1981 Costa Rica has received from the United States $383,000 for military training and $4 million for "nonlethal" equipment (including small-arms ammunition) for the almost 9,000 Civil and Rural Guards and Judicial Police. On the eve of President Reagan's visit to the country in December 1982, the Ministry of Public Security announced the formation of a reserve paramilitary force of 10,000 civilians, the Organización para Emergencia Nacional, to "Crush . . . any attempt at destabilization of the democratic system." According to *Latinamerica Press*, 15,000 members of the N.L.P. are organized into paramilitary units. Thus pacifist Costa Rica actually has almost as many men under arms as Guatemala, which has three times as many people and has been engaged in a civil war for twenty years. What distinguishes Costa Rica's police and home guard from a professional army is that they are equipped with light arms, undergo little training and have no professional officer corps; but all that could change with continued U.S. "assistance."

The anxiety about destabilization reflects profound social changes. The N.L.P.'s electoral base has always been the urban middle class, made up of bureaucrats, speculators, professionals, small manufacturers and other entrepreneurs, and even some better-off wage earners. What those groups had in common until recently was a fairly high level of consumption. Now that the system can no longer guarantee its life style, the class is beginning to fall apart as an electoral coalition, while the poor are becoming more vocal in their demands. Also making demands is the oligarchy of wealthy coffee growers, once the most powerful group in the country, which still dominates the economy of the central valley surrounding the capital.

President Monge won office in 1982 on the ticket of the N.L.P., which since the brief war of 1948 has alternated in power with shifting coalitions of small opposition parties representing the interests of organized labor and the oligarchs. Neither labor nor the oligarchy has been strong enough to govern alone, but each has been able to exercise veto power. As a result, the government has been unable to reduce public spending for popular social programs, such as national health care and education, on which a legally mandated 28 percent of the annual budget must be spent. Yet it has also been unable to impose more than a small income tax on the oligarchs, or to undertake any land reforms that might threaten their interests.

The nation's economic problems stem from the oil shocks of the early 1970s and from the falling price of coffee and bananas. When farm prices were high and the cost of imported petroleum low, Costa Rica prospered. Foreigners were eager to invest in the country because of its vigorously procapitalist government. But foreign investment has dwindled. Unable to tax the rich, the government has had to borrow heavily to finance the rising costs of the social programs. Since 1981 the colon has suffered a de facto devaluation of 500 percent, making foreign loans more difficult to pay off and reducing real incomes. In addition, Costa Rica depends heavily on imports of even the most basic necessities, worsening its foreign exchange crisis.

As a result of retrenchment by foreign-owned companies, the shifting of resources to capital-intensive production (for example, from crops to cattle raising) and layoffs in traditional industries, more than 20 percent of the work force is either unemployed or underemployed. Wages have not kept pace with the inflation rate, which was about 90 percent in 1982. According to a government study published that year, more than half the work force earned less than 3,000 colons ($50) a month: that is just enough to cover food costs; housing costs would be at least an additional 2,000 colons. The infant mortality rate is up; in one province it rose from 8.4 per 1,000 births in 1980 to 22.1 per 1,000 in 1983.

Strikes have become a common occurrence, and they are bitter and prolonged. In April 1982, doctors went on strike for forty-two days after the government refused to grant them a $40-per-month increase in their base pay. The devaluation of the colon had reduced their monthly salaries from $1,744 to $277.78. Also demanding higher wages were 3,000 workers at Del Monte's Banana Development Company (their average wage was 67 cents an hour), who went out in September of that year. The strike, which lasted sixty-three days, was marred by violence: six strikers were wounded when Rural Guards fired at them. There were major strikes in 1983 by petroleum workers, teachers and telephone workers. Mass rallies to protest the housing shortage have been held, and in the countryside, squatters on idle land owned by the banana companies have been evicted by the Rural Guard.

Along the northern border with Nicaragua, where poverty is acute, security forces are engaged in a perhaps intentionally ineffective campaign against the anti-Sandinista guerrillas commanded by Edén Pastora Gómez, who had been a prominent businessman in the area. Bloody feuding between pro- and anti-Sandinista groups has broken out.

Costa Rican democracy has been possible because of a truce in the class war between the oligarchy, labor and the middle class. But the truce is breaking down and will require serious renegotiation. Land takeovers, strikes and mass protests are bound to increase. Members of the middle class whose standard of living has been reduced will make common cause with the growing numbers of jobless, homeless and landless people clamoring for change; others will move sharply to the right. If, under U.S. pressure, the Civil and Rural Guards are trained and armed to the degree of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran Armies and become more repressive, opposition groups will be encouraged to take up arms. Costa Ricans cannot avoid the confrontation between the privileged and the poor occurring throughout Central America, but if they stick to their pacifist principles the country might be able to avoid becoming another theater in the Central American civil war. □

"Cuba, the Soviet Union and other Communist states . . . are carrying out what is clearly shown to be a well-coordinated covert effort to bring about the overthrow of El Salvador's established Government and to impose in its place a Communist regime with no popular support."

—U.S. State Department white paper, Communist Interference in El Salvador, *1981*

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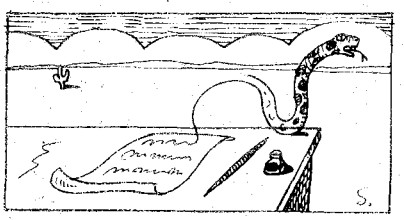

CENTRAL AMERICA:

Four Writers in The Labyrinth

EMIR RODRÍGUEZ MONEGAL

Ignorance about Central America is punctuated here only by stereotypes. The string of countries is seen as one big banana republic, plagued by dictators and guerrillas, exploited by imperialism, divided by illiteracy, hunger and superstition. Often forgotten in the litany of civil wars and foreign interventions that are supposed to have determined Central America's culture is its extraordinary Indian past. Forgotten also is its solid link to Hispanic traditions, which provide an international context to its modern poetic and fictional achievements. Although the Central American political and economic situation is what makes headlines here, there is no better way to understand the region than by turning to its writers. In their best works, the unresolved contradictions of the area can be seen without simplification and in their full tragic implications.

The Native Roots

Miguel Angel Asturias, Guatemala's Nobel Prizewinning novelist, embodied, perhaps too perfectly, a certain model of what a Latin American writer ought to be: deeply committed to his native soil and to the anti-imperialist cause, high-sounding and even prophetic in his style. The paradox is that Asturias discovered his native roots in Paris, under the guidance of the scholar Georges Raynaud and some surrealist poets.

Born in Guatemala, in 1899, of a well-to-do family of mixed ancestry (he was always proud of his Mayan features), Asturias lived the first twenty-one years of his life under Estrada Cabrera's brutal dictatorship. It was a fitting preparation for a man who would become famous for a brilliant satire on Latin American dictators, *El Señor Presidente*. In 1923 (after he received his law degree for a thesis titled "The Social Problem of the Indians") Asturias decided it would be healthier to go to London to study political economy, but a visit to Paris quickly became permanent residency. At the Sorbonne he took courses on Central American mythology given by Raynaud. With a Mexican friend, Asturias translated into Spanish, from Raynaud's French versions, some of the oldest texts of Mayan literature. He was soon in touch with Paris's small but brilliant colony of Spanish-American writers and began a long and fruitful friendship with the exiled Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. He also came to know a number of surrealist poets, especially Robert Desnos, who quit the Breton group in 1930 to devote himself to the Communist Party. Asturias, like Carpentier, shared Desnos's politics.

Although Asturias had already published some work in Guatemala, it was in Paris that he began to write in earnest. In 1925 he published a translation of the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Mayas. In 1930 his *Legends of Guatemala* appeared, with an enthusiastic preface by Paul Valéry, and he began the preliminary work on *El Señor Presidente*, which would not be completed for almost twenty years.

In 1930, Asturias returned home to find another dictator, Jorge Ubico, in charge. He shelved the novel and devoted his energies to a radio program, "The Newspaper of the Air." Ubico's downfall allowed Asturias to resume his novel in peace. It was published in Mexico in 1946, with a second, larger edition appearing in Buenos Aires in 1948. By then, Asturias was living in Argentina as a diplomatic representative of the democratic government of Juan José Arévalo.

The Mexican edition passed almost unnoticed, but the Argentine one was a triumph. Only a few critics dared to point out that twenty years earlier, in 1926, the Spanish writer Ramón María del Valle Inclán had published a similar book, *Tirano Banderas*. Asturias claimed that he read that novel only after the resemblance to his book had been pointed out to him, and he may have been telling the truth. The similarities are of a general nature: both works present through satire and caricature the squalor and corruption of an unidentified Latin American dictatorship; both use avant-garde techniques. But while Valle Inclán's novel consistently emphasizes the grotesque, Asturias's is less disciplined, and even resorts here and there to naturalistic devices. Another difference: Valle Inclán keeps his cool; Asturias gets angry, and sometimes sentimental. For the Spanish writer, Latin America is a fabulous, alienated and alienating landscape which he once visited and which he peoples with outrageous puppets; for Asturias, it is the anguished scene of his formative experience.

Asturias's second novel, *Men of Maize* (1949), a series of tales about a land in which the ancient Mayan myths are as alive as contemporary social conflicts, is more unified in tone. Although at the time some Indian peasants still cultivated maize only for domestic consumption (after all, men were made from maize, according to the *Popol Vuh*), others, more colonized, cultivated it only for profit, as the white man had taught them. In describing the clash between the old and new peasantry, with their deeply different conceptions of the world, Asturias depicts the conflict that still plagues the area, as the plight of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua today tragically demonstrates.

This brilliant work was Asturias's most important contribution to the new Latin American fiction that Borges, Carpentier and Uslar Pietri, among others, were already producing, and that would culminate with Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. Although the use, and even abuse, of native words makes it hard to read, *Men of Maize* is Asturias's masterpiece. His subsequent fiction either follows the same mythical pattern, but with less grace and skill, or seeks to blend it, unsuccessfully, with anti-imperialist propaganda. All those works were highly celebrated by the Latin American intelligentsia, who proclaimed Asturias a model and a mentor. Less celebrated was his willingness to represent his country in 1966 as Ambassador to France, at a time when his

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government, with U.S. assistance, was crushing revolutionary guerrillas. Thus it came as no surprise that when the Nobel Prize was awarded to Asturias in 1967, the Cuban cultural establishment did not join in the festivities.

Although Asturias also wrote poems and plays, he will be best remembered as a novelist. Pressed to define his esthetic credo in a 1972 interview with Rita Guibert, he resorted to an old avant-garde formula—magical realism: "There are no boundaries between reality and dream, between reality and fiction, between what is seen and what is imagined. The magic of our climate and light gives our stories a double aspect—from one side they seem dreams, from the other, they are realities." If that formula now seems clumsy, it helped Asturias and other "committed" writers to write politically centered works that transcended propaganda. Because he emphasized his native roots and showed that the Indians of Guatemala still believed in Mayan mythology, Asturias's work is as alive today as it was when it was first published in the polemical 1940s.

The International Connection

Long before Asturias discovered the Mayan past in Europe, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, born in 1867, had placed Central America in the center of the Hispanic literary world by producing the most sophisticated and beautiful poetry written in Spanish at the time. In less than two decades, Darío was recognized as the greatest Hispanic poet since Quevedo. Although when he died in 1916, a reaction against his poetry, and against Modernismo in general, was already apparent, Darío's work still exerts a profound influence on Spanish-American letters. As one critic proclaimed, any poem written in Spanish can be dated as having been written before or after him.

Darío began by creating his own poetic persona: he dropped his rather common name, Félix Rubén García Sarmiento, for the shorter and more effective Rubén Darío, which carried associations with Darius, the King of ancient Persia. An early and avid reader, he began writing poetry while still a child. A brief trip to Paris when he was 12 confirmed his admiration for Victor Hugo. Back home, at Nicaragua's National Library, he acquainted himself with the Spanish classics. In neighboring El Salvador he met the poet Francisco Gavidia (1864-1955) and began to take an interest in the poetry of the French Parnassians.

But the most decisive journey he took was to Chile, where he discovered a group of young poets who modeled themselves on the French Symbolists. He also read two North American authors the French had adopted: Poe and Whitman. Darío, still in his teens, rose splendidly to the challenge, and in 1888 he produced *Azul* . . . ("Blue"), in which he blends in a unique and curious harmony all the influences he had absorbed: romantic and Parnassian, classical and Symbolist. Even in this early work, his extraordinary mastery of meter, his uncanny ear and his highly refined sense of irony are evident. The book caught the attention not only of young poets in Latin America but also of the keenest critics in Spain, who, while deploring the excessive French influence, acknowledged the emergence of a great poet.

After Chile, Darío went to Buenos Aires, already the largest Latin American capital, and consolidated his fame with two books, both published in 1896. One is a collection of critical essays, *Los*

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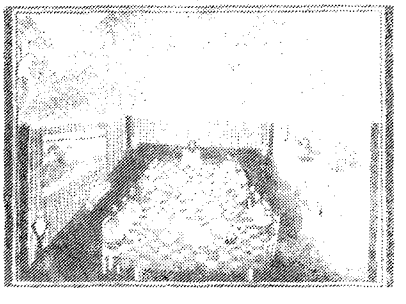

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raros ("The Strange Ones"), in which he introduced to Spanish-American readers such exotic creatures as the Cuban José Martí and the Franco-Uruguayan Conte de Lautréamont, Edgar Allan Poe and Paul Verlaine, Walt Whitman and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Henrik Ibsen and Max Nordau (the author of a best seller on the decadence of modern art). They were *his* authors, or at least the kind of authors he liked to write about: unknown geniuses, controversial writers, ultradecadent poets.

The other book was *Prosas profanas* ("Profane Proses"), a book of verses whose title played with the medieval meaning of "prose"—a church hymn. In the preface, a modernist manifesto, Darío argues for a "useless" kind of poetry, refined, exotic, precious; a poetry of evasion from the crude realities of Latin American life and society; a poetry of his own. He hated (that is, he pretended to hate) the time he was living in and longed for the Versailles of Louis XIV, for classical Greece or pre-Colombian America. An aristocrat, proud of his elegant hands, he graciously left democracy to Whitman.

Re-creating in Spanish the subtleties of French Parnassianism and the music of Verlaine, Darío transformed a rather austere and hard language into the most flexible and allusive of poetic instruments. A refined, tantalizing eroticism permeates his pages. The parody of sophistication and luxury is so successful that to this day literal-minded readers are unable to detect it, but parody it is. Darío knew perfectly well that he was living in Buenos Aires and not in Versailles and that he was writing in Spanish, not in Greek. It was this knowledge (shared by his best readers) that allowed him to employ a double vision. His work ought to be read both as a sincere imitation of certain sophisticated models and as a sincere effort to criticize those models through parody. Thus *Prosas profanas* stands as a kind of summation of the work and achievements of the early modernists.

His next book, *Songs of Life and Hope*, was published in Madrid in 1905. By that time, Darío had been acknowledged in Spain as a master of the new poetry. The dazzling and deliberately superficial style of his youth was still present, but a darker tone was audible. His eroticism was more agonized: the embrace was no longer simply a promise of ecstacy; it was also a rehearsal for death. Darío was a man of enormous appetites—for drink, drugs, women—and at 38 he felt like an old man. Unable to accept his own decline, he kept writing songs of hope while being steadily eroded by life.

Darío was also beginning to realize that Latin America needed its own poets and that he could not leave its grim realities to the many imitators of Whitman. Although he was living as a diplomat in Europe when Teddy Roosevelt ordered the invasion of Panama, in 1903, he wrote "To Roosevelt," a poetic denunciation of the "big stick" policy. The pressures of his position later impelled him to recant with another poem, "Salutation to the Eagle." But it was "To Roosevelt" that counted. It proved that Darío had a bit of Whitman in him.

In the last years of his life, Darío continued to add to his canon. The poet was still functioning splendidly—mellowed and autumnal perhaps, and oppressed by irrational fears, a darkness of spirit—but the man was collapsing. On the eve of World War I he settled in Paris to edit a magazine in Spanish, *Mundial* ("Universal"), which would become the rallying point for the new Latin American culture. Although it published some of the best Hispanic writers, *Mundial* was also a showcase for the propaganda of the new capitalistic, and scarcely democratic, regime of the New World. Darío's last years were a nightmare of drunkenness and physical decay. He died in 1916, completely destroyed, not yet 50. But the poetry he left behind was very much alive, as was the lesson that no matter how modest its origin, great poetry always finds the international audience it deserves. It was a lesson Darío's immediate heirs would never forget.

The Battle for Mt. Parnassus

In his native Nicaragua, Darío's descendants are still fighting for the best place on Mt. Parnassus. Today in Managua, while Ernesto Cardenal is both a Catholic priest and the Sandinista government's Minister of Culture, Pablo Antonio Cuadra is an editor of *La Prensa*, the newspaper which is constantly harassed and censored by the Sandinistas. The two embody, vividly the problematic situation of the independent writer in a regime that tends toward uniformity.

Catholicism and Marxism have been the contrasting sources of Cardenal's inspiration. He was born in Nicaragua in 1925. After engaging in some political activity against the Somoza dictato

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ships, he considered becoming a Trappist monk and even trained for a while under Thomas Merton at Our Lady of Gethsemani Abbey, in Kentucky. But he returned to Latin America to take holy orders and began an active life as preacher and poet. Concerned as much with the evils of this world as with the problems of eternal salvation, Cardenal followed Pablo Neruda's lead in writing politically committed verse that explores Latin America's past and present, denouncing exploitation and genocide. In *Psalms* (1964) Cardenal borrows impressive images of human frailty and madness from the Bible. In *Homage to the American Indians* (1969), he vividly evokes the tragic encounters of Indians and Europeans. He also borrows heavily from the Latin satirists, such as Martial and Juvenal, and from modern North American poets such as Merton and Ezra Pound.

Cuadra has followed a more traditional line not only in his poetry but in his ideology. Born in 1912, he belongs to a generation of exceptional poets, the most prominent of whom are José Coronel Urtecho and Joaquín Pasos. Like Cardenal, Cuadra believes in fighting native dictators and American imperialism but he has never been a Marxist. To this day he has attempted to preserve a critical and detached attitude toward the Sandinista regime. In his poetry he has sung the beauty of his native land, has found his roots in the Spanish lyrical tradition and has expressed a deeply felt identification with Christ. His *Canto temporal* (*Temporal Song*, 1943) emphasizes the worldly context of his verses while it points to the existence of another song—not temporal but eternal. If Cardenal incarnates the popular image of the committed poet, Cuadra in his splendid isolation presents another no less important image: that of the writer called to bear witness.

No government speaks for the whole of its country, especially in Central America. The unresolved tension in the region dates back to the arrival of the Spaniards and to the brutal submission of the Indians by regimes that, in spite of their differences, had in common the fact that they all were imported from afar and were imposed by force of arms. North Americans, well intentioned but lost in the intricacies of the Central American labyrinth, should add Asturias, Darío, Cardenal and Cuadra to their reading lists. □

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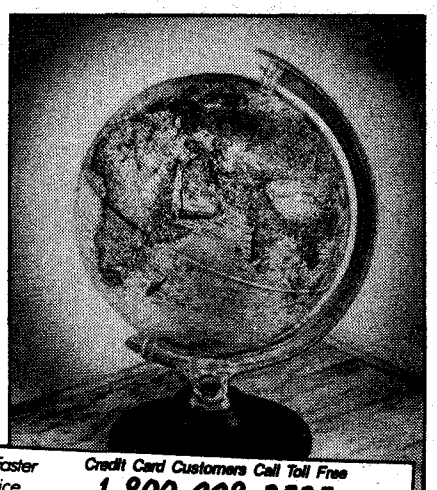

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A Poetry Sampler

ORCHID OF STEEL

Loving you in this war that wears us down
and enriches us.
Loving you without a thought for the fleeting moment
that brings parting to the hour of kisses.
Loving you in this war we fight, my love,
with arms and legs.
Loving you with fear hanging from our throats.
Loving you without knowing when we'll part, or when we'll
meet again.
Loving you because today the sun rose from between our
embracing bodies
and our smiles were sleepy in the morning.
Loving you because I heard your voice
and now I hope you will appear out of the night.
Loving you in all this uncertainty,
feeling this love a gift
a truce amidst so much pain, so many bullets
a moment inserted in the battle,
as a reminder of the skin's need for tenderness
in this loving you, my love
enclosed in a triangle of earth.

Gioconda Belli (Nicaragua)
(Translated by Electa Arenal and Gabriela Dreye)

LEÓN

I used to live in a big house by the Church of St. Francis
which had an inscription in the entrance hall saying
A V E M A R I A
and red corridors of brick,
an old red tiled roof
and windows with rusty iron grilles,
and a large courtyard just unbearable on stuffy afternoons
with a sad clock bird singing out the hours,
and someone's pale aunt in the courtyard reciting the rosary.
In the evenings I'd hear that angelus bell
("*The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary . . .* ")
the hand of a distant little girl playing a note on the piano,
and the bugle from some barracks.
At night a huge red moon rose above Calvary.
They told me stories of souls in purgatory and ghosts.
At midnight
the shade of General Arechabala rode a horse through the streets.
And the noise of a door closing . . . A black coach . . .
An empty cart rattling as it rolled through the Calle Real.
And then all the roosters in the neighborhood crowing,
and the song of the clock bird,
and my aunt who'd leave each morning for mass at 4
with the bells ringing in St. Francis,
ringing
in Calvary
and in St. John's Hospital
and the pitchers of the milkmen banging on the stone pavement
and a bread vendor knocking on a front door
and crying
BREAD
BREAD

Ernesto Cardenal (Nicaragua)
(Translated by Jonathan Cohen)

IGUANAS

I have seen the iguanas:
their stony eyes, their jungle hearts.

I have touched the iguanas:
their shadow garments, their tempestuous skins.

I have eaten the iguanas:
airy flavor, communion with the abyss.

I have heard the iguanas:
dark murmurs, a slinking through time.

I have dreamt the iguanas:
sunk islands, extinct dragons.

I have smelled the iguanas:
their lonely life, their scent of grass.

—And the peacocks, the butterflies
and the blue lark?

—Forget them. For the most secret animals
are the most divine.

Alfredo Cardona Peña (Costa Rica)
(Translated by Nicomedes Suárez Araúz)

SMALL HOURS OF THE NIGHT

When you know I'm dead don't say my name
because death and peace would stop then.

Your voice, the bell of your five senses, would forı
the thin beam of light my mist would be looking fc

When you know I'm dead, say unfamiliar words.
Say flower, bee, teardrop, bread, storm.
Don't let your lips find my eleven letters.
I'm sleepy, I've loved, I've earned silence.

Don't say my name when you know I'm dead:
it would come out of the dark ground for your voi

Don't say my name, don't say my name.
When you know I'm dead don't say my name.

Roque Dalton (1935-1975; El Salva
(Translated by Hardie St. Ma

HOSPITAL

A window with broken panes
that won't close,
a faded curtain
with enormous ears,
a small room just like a drawer,
an electric fan that's out of order,
an old burned out lamp,
a stain like an error
you can't wipe off,
three chairs for three wearinesses,
a bed full of doctors' tricks,
a night table on its day off,
an orange tree in front of the window, and emplo
voices and birds
and winter coming in, going out of hallways,
one sick man reading, another sleeping
and a third writing that death does not exist.

José Adán Castelar (Hondı
(Translated by Hardie St. Ma

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THE CEIBA

When our ancestors came
—*"and came because back there in that land*
they served masters
who treated them badly"—
hey climbed the great tree the day it bore fruit
nd blew its seeds in the air to sketch the route of exodus.
And some seeds took the route of birds nourished on worms
nd others followed small birds that flew together and fed on grain
nd others took the route of the buzzards and birds of prey that live
on carrion, and from their height see only death,
nd others the route of the eagles and condors, the highest,
he route taken only by butterflies and by thoughts.

This is the tree of contradiction
his is *Vahonché*, cited by Landa, and means "banner of virtue held high against devils."
his is the giant tree that Gómora saw, and fifteen men, hand-in-hand, could not surround it,
This is the tree with a three-part trunk, of Oviedo, higher than the tower of San Roman in the city of Toledo.
And it is what Nuñez de la Vega tells inhabitants of this earth have in all the public squares of their towns,
nd below the trees they hold councils
nd swing incense because they believe
hat their lineage comes from the roots of the Ceiba.

I recall its ancient shadow, traveling this ruined city.
n the Street of Candlearia where my house stood
—I speak of the old house where I was born—
ot a stone is left now.
And the moon
that white raven
saying, "Nevermore!"

Here I recall its ancient shadow when there is not enough love
o lift the stones.
"Leave the stones, my people!"
et a new roof cover your exiles. Let a tree
pread its branches.
Here is nothing
hat was not told in the book of the prophets of Chumayel:
'Here Yaax-Imixché, the Green Ceiba, will rise, in the center of the province as a sign and memory of annihilation."

There where this tree is born is the center of the world.
What you see from its crown is what your heart yearns for.

This is the tree that lovingly seats your childhood on its knees.
With the light and silky cotton of its fruit, your people made pillows,
where they lay down to rest and to weave their dreams.

If you climb this tree, the snake becomes a bird
nd the word song

This is the Mother Ceiba in whose swollen trunk your people
enerated pregnancy and fertility.
Of its white wood, so easy to work, your people made a vessel in one piece
nd that boat is the first cradle of their roots, when it sails, and
their coffin when it arrives at port.

Of this tree men learned compassion and architecture.
Gift and order.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra (Nicaragua)
(Translated by Grace Schulman)

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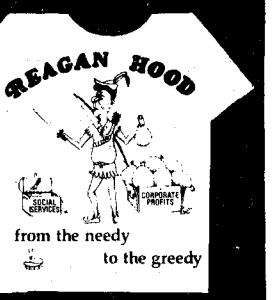

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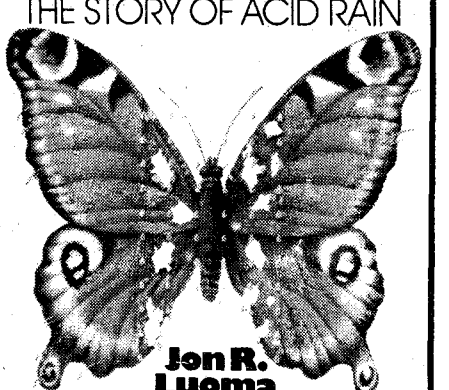

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ART.

LUCY R. LIPPARD

Though we are beginning to wipe the grime of neglect and ignorance from our windows on Central America, we continue to look through them with disbelief. Asked to write about "the art scene in Central America," my first response was, There isn't any. There is no art *scene* in El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala . . . or in Costa Rica . . . or in Nicaragua. But there is always *art*.

There are still galleries and museums, even in Guatemala and Honduras (countries described by a recent returnee as a death camp and a military camp, respectively). But little happens in them. The reasons are political and economic as much as cultural. Visual art plays a particularly insignificant role in these countries compared with movies, radio, popular music, poetry and theater. In San Salvador, the all-pervasive influence of the United States makes high art fashionable in some circles, but since everything indigenous is politically threatening, and since there is no market and little audience, mediocrity reigns. Censorship and self-censorship render art making of all kinds extremely difficult in Central American capitals. Cultural publications such as the lively Honduran *Alcaraván* exist but cannot thrive in a climate of apathy and fear.

All of this has to be understood in light of the fact that only in the 1970s were humanities departments and the Bachelor of Arts degree introduced into most Central American universities. The modest cultural flowering they stimulated was paralleled by renewed aspirations for social change. It was the revolution, for instance, that brought the poet Roque Dalton to a Salvadoran audience and sparked the first independent Salvadoran films. Radio too has blossomed—and not simply as a political tool. Radio Venceremos broadcasts children's plays from the liberated zones, and poetry is broadcast as a matter of course over Salvadoran radio.

Honduras's best-known poet, Roberto Sosa, who has chosen to remain in his native Tegucigalpa, describes his country as "that enormous cultural pothole in Central America." For an artist, he says, "there is no road left but to be in favor of the oligarchies or against them." It is, in fact, impossible to talk about art in Central America without acknowledging the class struggle underlying every aspect of life there, though varying from country to country. Artists still working in San Salvador, for instance, may enjoy the same illusion of making "neutral art" as do those in New York City, yet the fact that they are allowed to make art at all places them high on the social scale and far to the right on the political spectrum. Sosa calls artists in favor of the dictatorship "ideological bodyguards," and poets who write speeches "Walt Disneys, because they make animals talk."

At the other end of the ladder are the Indians, whose art—so admired by North Americans, who have destroyed their own native cultures—has been systematically repressed. The current Guatemalan slaughter was preceded by the Salvadoran *matanza*, the 1932 massacre of some 30,000 peasants which marked the end of the Indians' free practice of their customs, arts and Nahuatl language. The loss for non-Indians was less direct but nonetheless devastating. When native cultures disappear, the bourgeoisie too loses its roots—roots many artists have not yet even discovered.

The Central American art we tend to find most attractive is what's left from the indigenous cultures—the little "primitive" paintings sold in the streets and markets, for instance. Educated Central American artists have looked to Mexico, Spain and France for models, and the dominant painting styles parallel the brutal fantasies of Latin American literature. There is a neo-Surrealist darkness, a shadowy, skeptical quality at odds with the Anglo fondness for clarity and sentiment.

Most interesting art in Latin America is more or less politicized (read left wing), a fact viewed askance by most gringos. Explains the exiled Salvadoran poet Claribel Alegría: "In Latin America, politics is always black or white. You are on the side of the oppressed and dispossessed or you are on the side of the oligarchs, the multinational corporations." In the United States, she continues, "politics is basically so dull. You have two major parties, both of them bourgeois and big-business oriented. In other words, a lighter shade of gray to choose from." That may ac-

Lucy R. Lippard writes for The Village Voice. *A collection of her essays on art and politics,* Get the Message?, *will be published by E.P. Dutton in the spring.*

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count for the incomprehension with which the smoldering reds and browns and blacks of Latin American art are greeted in SoHo.

Nicaragua, where a burgeoning renaissance of popular culture is being nipped in the bud by threatened invasion, is the exception. Although the Ministry of Culture and the independent Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers have exhibition spaces, there is a shortage of paper for posters and paint for murals. Nevertheless, Managua offers a striking contrast to the other Central American capitals, in which art has retreated to fortified backwaters. Infant Sandinista "tradition" insists that the country incorporate culture into all aspects of social life, including war. Artists' brigades at the front help protect and bring in the harvest as well as make a pictorial record of the *campesinos* and soldiers with whom they work.

For better or worse, Nicaraguan artists are being deprived of separation from daily experience; they are forced to "stay in touch," to make objects whose purpose is to communicate as well as to decorate, to reinforce communality as well as individuality. Yet most of their art is not identifiable as "political" because its consciousness is embedded in forms and conventions that are just beginning to change.

In the meantime, other Central American artists are condemned to die at home of stagnation or repression, or to work abroad, deprived of their roots, of moral and economic support, of contact with compatriots and sympathetic audiences. Living with fear for those still at home, these exiles are not only victims of psychological pressures and censored emotions but are often torn between shame for the provincialism of their virtually unheard-of countries, pride in the struggles for change taking place there and guilt for not being part of them. The exiled artist's world view tends to be alienated and passive at worst, alienated and passionately active at best.

To help sustain exiled Salvadoran artists, the Institute for the Arts and Letters of El Salvador in Exile (INALSE) was formed in New York in 1982. Director Daniel Flores y Ascencio acknowledges that the 60 percent illiteracy rate, lack of schools, shutdown of the national university and extermination of intellectual opposition have aborted cultural development and have "veiled the real face of El Salvador not only from the world but from its own people."

Working from the exile's double need to maintain the national heritage and to gain support from the artists' community here, INALSE helped initiate Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, which has become a gigantic campaign launched this month in some thirty New York galleries, in twenty-one magazines and in twenty-three cities across the United States and Canada. It includes theme and benefit exhibitions of work from, about and for Central America; video, film and performance art festivals; musical and theatrical events. Artists Call was conceived as "an esthetic and political strategy" to raise consciousness not only about political and cultural issues but specifically about the role of art and the importance of international solidarity among artists. Splendidly announced by Claes Oldenburg's poster (a banana monument being toppled) and Peter Gourfain's button (resistant artists brandishing brushes), Artists Call challenges the Reagan Administration's uses and abuses of the "freedom of expression" it denies the artists of Central America, who are viciously suppressed precisely because they are the ones who can show and tell others what is really happening.

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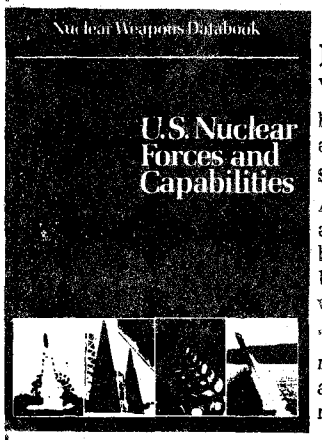

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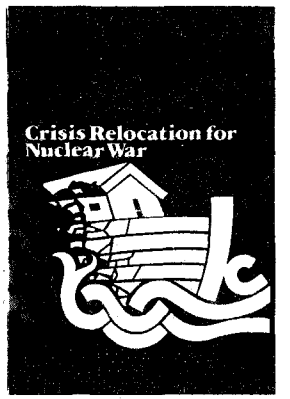

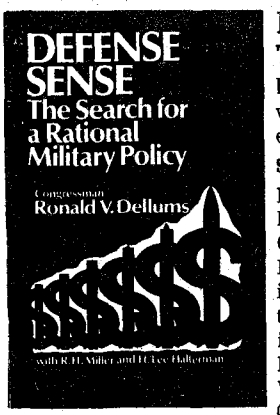

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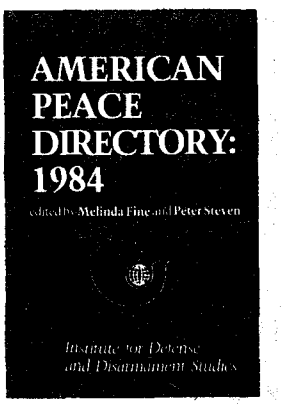

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FILMS.

ANNE NELSON

When the Mountains Tremble
Nicaragua: Report From the Front

Guatemala defies objectivity: its long, ugly war of counter-insurgency, its corrupt politics and its physical beauty are startling even by Central American standards. Guatemala also defies comprehension: generations of journalists have staggered out of the country bested by its impenetrability. More than half the population are descendants of Mayan Indians, hidden behind the tapestry of their culture and divided even from one another by their two dozen languages—Cakchiquel, Quiché, Kekchí. The Indians tend to close themselves off from outsiders, in part because they've been brutalized and enslaved by every new wave of "civilization" to come along.

The elites are just as xenophobic. Unlike their cousins in El Salvador and Honduras, Guatemala's haughty old Castilian families, German coffee planters and career army officers have decided they can tough it out without U.S. aid, and avoid the attendant plagues of Congressional delegations and media image-brokers. There are no smokescreen measures like land reform or human rights certifications in Guatemala. The savagery is open and unashamed.

It is against this bizarre and agonized landscape that Tom Sigel and Pamela Yates have filmed their documentary *When the Mountains Tremble*. Sigel and Yates are well known in the Central American press corps as the most knowledgeable and courageous film crew in

Anne Nelson has worked on documentaries in Chile, Nicaragua and Honduras for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

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the region. Their work has appeared on CBS and PBS; *Mountains* recasts some of that previously broadcast material within their own framework.

The results are some remarkable glimpses into a warring society. Slum women pick through garbage with babies strapped to their backs. Guerrillas court villagers with promises of protection. An archbishop, splendid in his red and black vestments, blandly explains how his brand of Catholicism can countenance the vilest of dictatorships. Indian women keen for their dead as young soldiers smile self-consciously for the camera. For a comparable vision of exotic madness we must turn to Miguel Angel Asturias, the country's Nobel Prizewinning novelist who died in 1974. *Mountains* shows us that Asturias, like García Márquez, wasn't always fantasizing; often, he was depicting stark truths.

The problems with *Mountains* lie not in the story but in its telling. There is a current school of thought in film circles that holds that it's cheating to use narration in documentaries—like using training wheels for a bicycle. *Mountains* relies instead on the personal testimony of a young Indian woman, Rigoberta Menchú, which is intercut throughout the film. Menchú is certainly worth a film in her own right, but *Mountains* ends up being two films, and we are sometimes made to jump too abruptly from one to the other. The film's first half, a historical guide, adds to the confusion by mixing excellent archival footage with docudrama, contemporary news sequences and interviews.

It's only in the second half, when the focus narrows, that the film really soars, taking the viewer back and forth across the lines from guerrilla camp to army barracks to village graveyard. To their credit, the filmmakers let the Guatemalans speak for themselves, though they do not dodge taking a position; the world has too many "extreme right, extreme left, innocent civilians caught in the crossfire" films as it is. All the same, their unblinking admiration for the guerrillas leaves a number of important political questions unanswered, especially in light of the crushing setbacks the Guatemalan guerrillas and their supporters have suffered over the past year.

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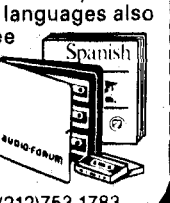

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chief, Germán Chupina, to denounce subversion. "Don't tell me stories," responds Chupina, "name me names." Documentary footage of trade unionists, students and centrist politicians being clubbed, gassed and hauled off to certain death reveals what happens when the names are named. President Efraín Ríos Montt (deposed last August) appears in his Holy Roller temple and in selections from his weekly television sermonette. Between rantings and parables he manages a wry observation: "One thing is certain—we're at war."

Most of the strengths of *Mountains*—and few of its weaknesses—are repeated in *Nicaragua: Report From the Front*, in which Sigel and Yates apply their talent for crossing the barricades to the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. They provide an inside look at a Sandinista border patrol, their C.I.A.-backed counterrevolutionary antagonists and the tormented lives of the peasants in their path. The film leaves little doubt about who is backing the *contras*. In one striking sequence an officer gives a tour of the company arsenal, where all supplies are stamped with the names of the American cities where they were made. Some of the former National Guardsmen sound as though they would welcome another Somoza-style dictatorship, but there is a curious pathos to other, younger, fighters. They don't know why they're fighting, they just know their conditions have improved with the escalation of U.S. involvement. "We used to fight with handguns," says Commandante Max, "and then overnight we got aid."

Taken together, *When the Mountains Tremble* and *Nicaragua: Report From the Front* offer an unparalleled glimpse inside the Central American wars. □

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Further Reading

Central America

Tom Barry, Beth Wood and Deb Preusch, *Dollars and Dictators* (Grove, 1983). An economic analysis of twentieth-century Central America, with separate sections on the economy of each Central American country (including Belize) and a detailed inventory of U.S. investment in the region.

Philip Berryman, *Religious Roots of Rebellion* (Orbis Books, 1984). Complementing Lernoux's work, Berryman describes how the church has influenced social change in each country in Central America.

Martin Diskin, ed., *Trouble in Our Back Yard* (Pantheon, 1983). Essays on the church, U.S. policy, the Salvadoran political system, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The U.S. in Central America* (Norton, 1983). An analysis of the relation between long-term U.S. involvement and revolt in Central America.*

Penny Lernoux, *The Cry of the People* (Doubleday, 1980; revised paper edition, Penguin, 1982). A description of how the "People's Church" emerged from Vatican II and the 1968 bishops conference in Medellín, Colombia. Basic to understanding how the church has influenced social movements in Central America.

National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, "Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America" (January 1984). The Kissinger commission's recommendations on U.S. foreign policy. Available for $4.75 from the Government Printing Office, North Capitol and H Sts. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20401.

Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA), *Changing Course: A Blueprint for Peace in Central America and the Caribbean* (1984). Essays prepared for release at the time of the Kissinger report, suggesting alternative U.S. policy options for peace and regional economic development. Available for $5.75 from PACCA, 2288 Fulton, No. 103, Berkeley, Calif. 94704, or from the Institute for Policy Studies, 1901 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, or from the Central American Resource Center, Box 2327, Austin, Tex. 78710.

Stanford Central America Action Network, *Revolution in Central America* (Westview, 1983). A comprehensive collection of articles from the 1970s and 1980s, organized into sections dealing with the rise of revolution, U.S. policy, economic development, agrarian structure, human rights, the church, women and Nicaragua.

Costa Rica

"Behind the Myth of Rural Equality," *Latin America Weekly Report*, September 30, 1983. A well-documented refutation of the popular notion that Costa Rican democracy is based on an egalitarian land-tenure system.

Marc Edelman, "Costa Rica Next," *The Nation*, May 21, 1983. A discussion of Costa Rica's growing involvement in the anti-Sandinista effort.

Marc Edelman, "Costa Rica: Seesaw Diplomacy," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, November-December 1983 (the first of three articles). An analysis of Costa Rica's political and economic problems, and its relations with the United States.

El Salvador

Americas Watch Committee and American Civil Liberties Union, *Report on Human Rights in El Salvador* (Vintage, 1982). A detailed compilation of human rights violations assembled for presentation at the time of the Administration's January 1982 certification of human rights. Supplements for the July 1982 and the two 1983 certifications were published separately and are available from the Americas Watch Committee, 36 W. 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036, for $6, $5 and $5, respectively.*

James Brockman, *The Word Remains: A Life of Oscar Romero* (Orbis Books, 1983). A moving account of the life of the martyred archbishop and the role played by the church from 1977 to 1981.

Carmen Diana Deere, "A Comparative Analysis of Agrarian Reform in El Salvador and Nicaragua," *Development and Change*, Vol. 13 (1982). A striking comparison of how El Salvador and Nicaragua have restructured rural life.

James Dunkerley, *The Long War: Dictatorship and Revolution in El Salvador* (Junction Books, London, 1982; distributed in the United States by Schocken). A history of twentieth-century El Salvador through 1982, with details on the development of the guerrilla movement.*

Piero Gleijeses, "The Case for Power-Sharing in El Salvador," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1983. A proposal for power-sharing to end Salvadoran violence.

Michael Massing, "About-Face on El Salvador," *Columbia Journalism Review*, November-December 1983. A description of the progressive decline in U.S. media coverage of El Salvador.

Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador* (Westview, 1982). A history of twentieth-century El Salvador through 1982, including a discussion of the church and the guerrilla movement.*

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Philip Russell, *El Salvador in Crisis* (Colorado River Press, 1984). A history from the Spanish conquest to the present, and a description of economic development, social conditions, agrarian reform, refugees and the guerrilla movement. Available for $8.95 from Colorado River Press, Box 7547, Austin, Tex. 78712.*

Laurence Simon and James Stephens Jr., *El Salvador Land Reform, 1980-81: Impact Audit* (Oxfam America, 1982). A detailed description of the Salvadoran land reform, who benefits and who doesn't. Available for $5 from Oxfam America, 115 Broadway, Boston, Mass. 02116.*

Guatemala

Americas Watch Committee, *Human Rights in Guatemala: No Neutrals Allowed* (1982) and *Creating a Desolation and Calling it Peace* (1983). Available for $5 each from the Americas Watch Committee, 36 W. 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

George Black, "Garrison Guatemala," and "Guatemala, the War is Not Over," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, January-February 1983, and March-April 1983. The 1954 coup and its aftermath, U.S. relations, the guerrilla movement, and a close look at the Lucas García and Ríos Montt administrations.*

Shelton Davis and Julie Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala* (Oxfam, 1982). Development workers describe their experiences and the impact of political violence on peasants. Available for $5 from Oxfam, 115 Broadway, Boston, Mass. 02116.

Jonathan Fried et al., eds., *Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History* (Grove, 1983). Fifty-four essays and interviews on Guatemalan history, the state, the church, the guerrilla movement and U.S. policy.

"Guatemala: The Roots of Revolution," *Special Update/Latin America*, February 1983. A twenty-page description of political and social conditions. Available for $1 from WOLA, 110 Maryland Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.*

Richard H. Immerman, *The C.I.A. in Guatemala* (University of Texas Press, 1983). An account of the 1954 C.I.A. overthrow of the democratically elected Arbenz government, using U.S. documents released under the Freedom of Information Act.

National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild and Lawyers Committee Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, "Counterinsurgency as Terrorism: Human Rights Violations in Guatemala" (September 1983). A report based on a 1983 trip to Guatemalan refugee camps in Mexico. Available for $4.50 from the National Lawyers Guild, 14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, Mass. 02108.

Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Doubleday, 1982 A detailed account of the 1954 interventio

Honduras

Americas Watch Committee, "Human Rigl in Honduras: Signs of 'The Argenti Method.'" Available for $2 from the Ame cas Watch Committee, 36 W. 44th St., Ne York, N.Y. 10036.

Richard Swedberg, "The Honduran Tra Union Movement, 1920-1982" (May 198 Available for $2.50 from CAMINO, 11 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 021

Philip Wheaton, "Inside Honduras" (A gust 1982). A discussion of the militarizati of Honduras from 1980 to 1982. Availal for $3.50 from EPICA, 1470 Irving St. N Washington, D.C. 20010.

Nicaragua

George Black, *Triumph of the People* (Z Press, London, 1981; distributed in t United States by Littlefield, Adams). detailed discussion of the Somoza regin the Sandinista guerrilla movement and t social and economic programs of the n government.

John A. Booth, *The End and the Beginnii The Nicaraguan Revolution* (Westvie 1982). A history of nineteenth-century N aragua, United States interventi (1912-1933), and Nicaraguan society unc the Somoza and Sandinista programs.

Carmen Diana Deere, "A Comparat Analysis of Agrarian Reform in El Salvac and Nicaragua," *Development and Chan* Vol. 13 (1982). A striking comparison rural life in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Frances Moore Lappé, "Nicaragua: Revo tion and/or Democracy," *Christianity a Crisis*, December 26, 1983. A penetrati consideration of the concept of democr as applied to Nicaragua.

Richard Millett, *The Guardians of Dynasty: A History of the U.S.-Crea Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua and Somoza Family* (Orbis Books, 197 Another problem raised by interventi how to withdraw and leave behind a stat pro-American government.

Margaret Randall, *Sandino's Daughte Testimonies of the Nicaraguan Women Struggle* (New Star Books, 1981). The S dinista experience as told by Nicaragu women. Available for $7.95 from Flat I Books, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 814, New Yo N.Y. 10010.

Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer, ec *The Nicaragua Reader: Documents of Revolution Under Fire* (Grove, 1984). Six one essays and speeches on internatio relations, the state and the Atlantic Coas

Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua: The La of Sandino* (Westview, 1981). A conc

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137-page history from the conquest to the Sandinista victory, followed by discussions of Nicaraguan culture, society, politics and international relations.

Thomas Walker, ed., *Nicaragua in Revolution* (Praeger, 1982). A collection of essays on the early years of the Sandinista revolution.

Newsletters

Newsletters generally publish short, unsigned summaries of recent political and economic events.

"Central America Report." Subscription information available from Inforpress Centroamericana, 9 a calle "A" 3-56, Zona 1, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

"Central America Update." Subscription information available from Box 2207, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2TS.

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"MAURICE BISHOP SPEAKS, The Grenadian Revolution 1979-83." 352 pages, $6.95, postage 75¢. Includes 27 Bishop speeches, Castro's November 1983 Grenada speech, 8 pages photos. Pathfinder Press, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

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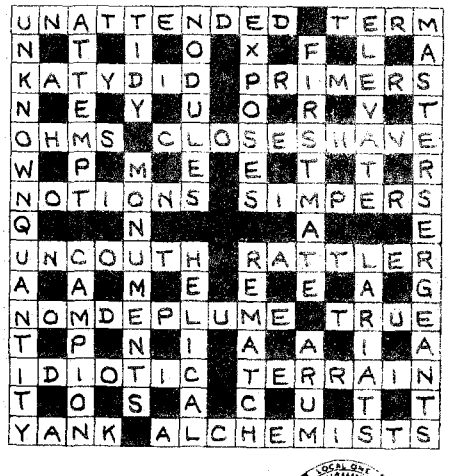

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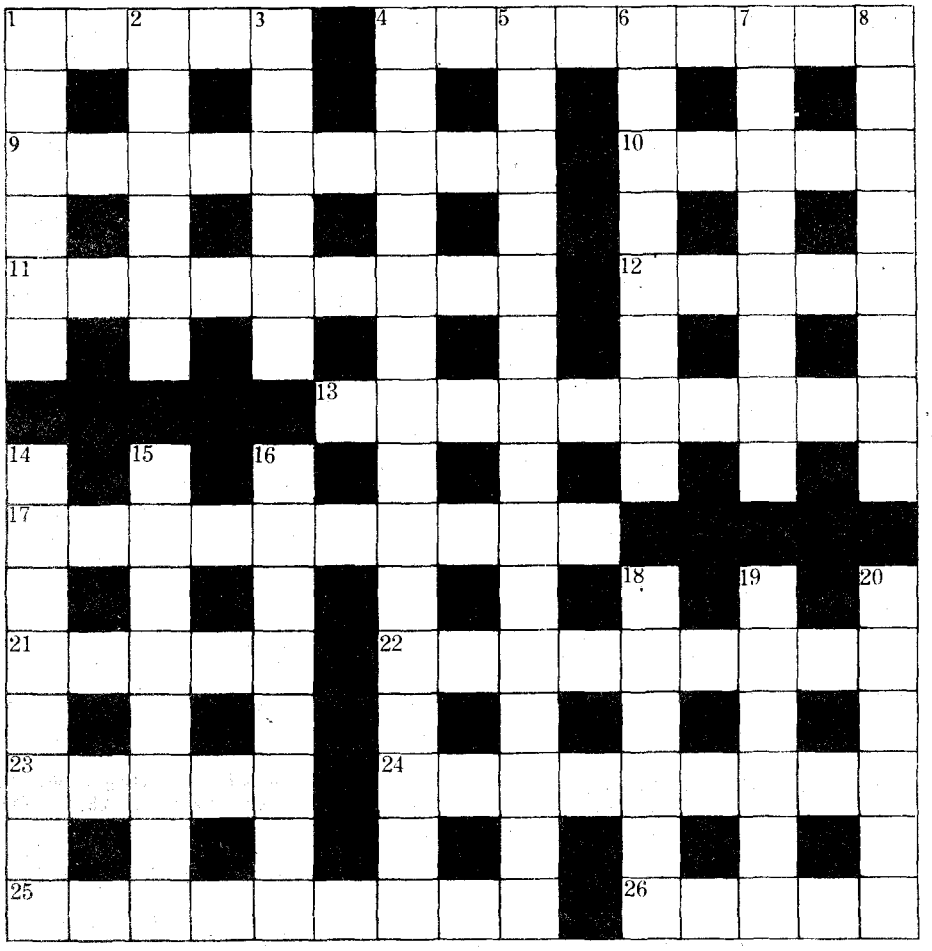

ACROSS

1 It may be nothing to a half sister, but it's a pleasant spot. (5)
4 Very fortunate boxers for example—people speak of such enviously. (5,4)
9 Alias for Grant, and a storybook fighter. (9)
10 Did Wolfe's have a homeward look? (5)
11 Your label might be a different color. (5,4)
12 You might do it to wound, one way or another. (5)
13 Get out and sing haphazardly for a stunning result. (10)
17 What they're made of isn't exactly sackcloth, but rub the wrong way when your friend comes back and catches something. (6,4)
21 Does one urge things on, such as a moth? (5)
22 Possibly a sort of nag outran a man of the woods, originally. (9)
23 When they return, some vacationers hate to see [illegible]. (5)
24 The people of old Athens—very vulgar! (3,6)
25 Fruit given in appreciation? Not exactly! (9)
26 The precise way to compel payment. (5)

DOWN

1 Priests might take them as well as soldiers. (6)
2 There may be many such in the pound, but one errs this way. (6)
3 A lot of horses might be standing firm. (6)
4 Greeted as a relative comeback. (4-4,7)
5 The balance of things might be found here, being very serious, such as Lincoln. (6,2,7)
6 Certainly not the old gray line which is broken. (8)
7 Material which makes the liver, for example, stop living? (8)
8 One way to prevent raveling with two points to fifty-five on the border. (8)
14 One might get into trouble by being too conscientious. (8)
15 Outfit that goes in flat strips, denoting freebooters. (8)
16 Choriamb arranged for personal effect. (8)
18 A way to overlook things in a sign, or example thereof. (6)
19 Could be all set to portray Lady Penelope Devereux, according to Sidney. (6)
20 Put oil on, but not in a different way. (6)

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